JUMP CUT

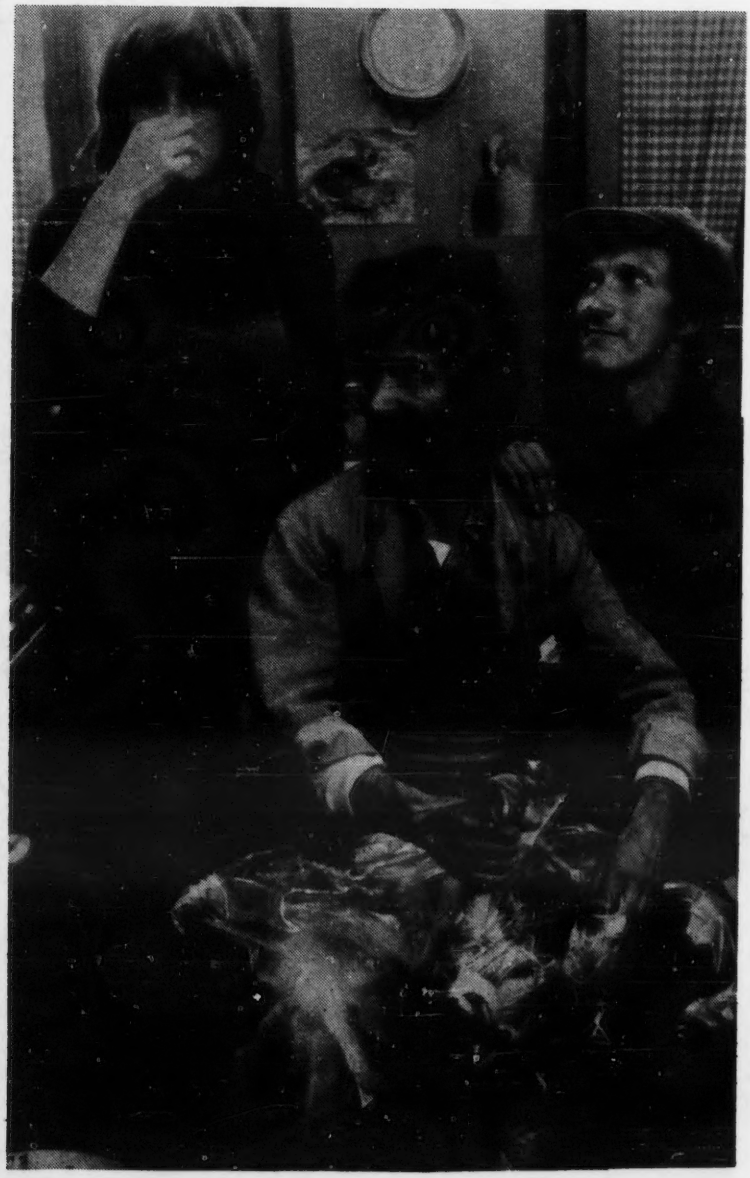
NO. 15

A REVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY CINEMA

75¢
(Canada $1)

Tanner's *JONAH*

Subversive Charm or Reactionary Nostalgia?



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> Without a political basis, collective creation is no more than collective eating in a restaurant.
>
> Jean-Luc Godard

JONAH WHO WILL BE 25 IN THE YEAR 2000

The Subversive Charm of Alain Tanner

--Robert Stam

The *New York Times* called Alain Tanner's LA SALAMANDRE "a dangerously appealing movie." Decoding the *Times* notion of "dangerous" to really mean: "radical," "subversive," we have in the *Times* formula a concise account of the appeal not only of LA SALAMANDRE but also of Tanner's latest film: JONAH WHO WILL BE 25 IN THE YEAR 2000. Charming and appealing, JONAH is also radical, subversive, highly politicized--a combination to which we are not accustomed. Beneath its deceptively soft and lyrical surface lies a serious film which deserves, despite some flaws, our enthusiastic support.

JONAH tells the story of eight people in today's Switzerland trying, in diverse ways, to free themselves from the institutional and societal chains that oppress them. Mathieu is a typesetter and union militant who has just lost his job. Mathilde works in a factory and looks forward to having a baby, the Jonah of the title. While searching for a new job, Mathieu encounters Marguerite and Marcel, two produce gardeners; they hire him to collect the manure they use as fertilizer. Taken together, Marcel and Marguerite love the entire animate world; he discourses eloquently on the unfathomable mystery of animals and the horrors of imminent ecological disaster, while her obsession is with organic farming. Max, meanwhile, is a disillusioned Trotskyist and gambler currently working as a proofreader. Although he has more or less relinquished political activity in despair, he does take action by disseminating information concerning an impending land speculation swindle. He warns the potential victims, among whom are Marguerite and Marcel. Max meets Madeleine, a secretary by vocation and heretical tantric mystic by avocation. As an employee of the bank that is perpetrating the swindle, she consents to help Max thwart it by securing the necessary documents. Marco is a neighbor to Marguerite and Marcel. A dreamer and highschool history teacher, a twentieth century descendant of *philosophes* like Rousseau and Voltaire, he lectures on sausages and the "folds of time." He falls in love with Marie, a supermarket cashier who lives in France next door to a retired railroad engineer, Charles. As a cashier she knowingly undercharges her elderly customers, and is finally jailed for this generosity which the managers find suspect. Marco, for his part, is fired, presumably for his unorthodox teaching methods, but really for daring suggest that the capitalist system is not eternal and could conceivably collapse.

JONAH explores the interwoven lives of these characters. It situates them within the social and economic landscape; we see the kind of work they do and witness their struggle to live a more human life in the face of bourgeois alienation. The eight central figures are simultaneously integrated into society, if only by the work they perform, and live outside of it; they are both in the mainstream and on the margins. Earning their daily bread in the capitalist kingdom of means, they have their eyes affixed and their ears attuned to a distant kingdom of ends. While few of them are explicitly leftist, their words and deeds suggest conscious and unconscious opposition to the system, an opposition which takes diverse forms--Mathieu's union militancy, Marco's anti-authoritarian pedagogy, Marie's cash register sabotage, Madeleine's "transgressions," Marguerite and Marcel's organic resistance to the land-grabbers, Mathieu's alternative school. The film implicitly, perhaps *too* implicitly, suggests a possible alliance between the forces of opposition embodied by these characters and all those oppressed, excluded, or marginalized by the capitalist system: the unemployed, the old treated like so much excess baggage, the Third World workers in their squalid *bidonvilles*.

This summary of the implicit political strategy of the film brings up two major flaws: first, that it is inadvertently sexist; second, that it passes over the exploitation of Third World workers in Switzerland in an offensively cursory way. First, the sexism. The women in JONAH are pallid stereotypes (Mathilde the earth mother, Madeleine the spacy mystic, Marguerite the mysterious), while the men are multi-dimensional and more politically assertive. A disproportionate number of the good political lines go to Mathieu, Max and Marco, while the women are granted no feminist consciousness and little left consciousness. Tanner has Marie, furthermore, cater to Marco's sexual fantasies, while hers go unspecified and presumably unfulfilled. One of the women--Marguerite--*is* strong; she drives tractors, hires and fires, balances the books. But what Tanner gives her in strength he takes away in likeability, for Marguerite is in many ways the least sympathetic of the characters. Women in JONAH are too often, and too stereotypically, associated with Nature ("All is mystery in nature," Marcel says of Marguerite's pecadilloes) or Nurture (Mathilde breastfeeding and waiting to be "filled up" with babies). Women are not shown as potential agents of revolutionary change; they are not even revealed to be oppressed *as women*.

Tanner compounds the problem by having Marguerite rent out her sexual favors to immigrant workers at twenty francs a throw. Why, one wonders, have her initiate these relations, and why with immigrant workers? Here Tanner takes two oppressed groups--women and Third World workers in Europe--and places them, for reasons that are not at all clear, in relations of mutual exploitation. Still shots show us the workers' quarters papered over with photographs of nude women. Such an association runs the danger of confirming racist attitudes (the immigrant workers just want to sleep with "our" women) while it obscures the oppression of these workers. It is they, after all, who are the most brutally exploited victims of Swiss capitalism, and it is thanks to them that most Swiss people can live in relative comfort. In his other films, Tanner lampoons Swiss xenophobia (witness the bitingly satiric sequence in LA SALAMANDRE where Paul, costumed as an Arab, elicits racist slurs) and Tanner's co-writer John Berger has written eloquently of their situation. Here, however, the treatment is too perfunctory and too ambiguous. JONAH thus missed an opportunity to highlight the links between the oppression of foreign workers and the other kinds of oppression shown in the film. Mathieu points out that capitalism needs unemployment but he overlooks the central importance of the immigrant workers within this process. JONAH is not meant, admittedly, to be a realistic tableau of Swiss society, but in this case Tanner might have better ignored the guest workers completely, rather than give them an enigmatical once-over lightly.

Barring these flaws, however, JONAH offers intelligent analysis, in the form of a distanced fable, of life in the afterwash of the militant sixties. While Max, the burnt-out politico, argues that the sixties have left a legacy only of vulgarized mysticism, macrobiotic foods, and casual sex, Tanner the director regards the present with poised and guarded optimism. For him the sixties are less an irretrievable golden age than a lesson for the future, the springboard for a new leap forward. In keeping with this optimism, the film moves, overall, from anonymity and isolation to community. As chance encounters burgeon into embryonic forms of solidarity, the characters begin to generate strong feelings of communality. The child Jonah, one feels, is mothered and fathered by the collectivity; and he symbolically embodies their hopes and aspirations.

At the same time, JONAH never cultivates the counter-culture fantasy that capitalist society can be easily and painlessly "greened" by a modest planting of Consciousness III. The repressive arsenal of that society is far too evident throughout the film. Marie is jailed. Marco and Mathieu are fired. Documentary footage of the Swiss army put-down of unemployment demonstrations reminds us that peaceful, neutral Switzerland has its own heritage of repression. Where political and legal repression fail, economic pressure takes its toll. We spend most of our energy trying to survive, Mathieu points out, and some of us, with the little energy left over, try to fight the system.

Nor does Tanner hide the conflicts that rend the fragile community of JONAH. The group is divided by philosophical differences (Madeleine would dissolve all contradiction in Yin-Yang complementarity; Max objects that the capital-labor contradiction is irreconcilable) and by tactical disputes (alternative versus public schools). Rather than obscure these tensions, the film makes of them a potential source of strength. While forming a kind of community, the members of the group criticize each other: Marguerite (apparently voicing Tanner's own view on alternative schools) insists, against Mathieu, that the children attend public schools; Mathieu scolds Marco for not safeguarding his teaching job as a base for political work; Madeleine mocks Max's Protestant moralism and premature despair ("Men want history to go as fast as life. It doesn't work that way.") while he censures her naivete concerning class struggle. But it is in this very process of mutual and caring criticism that a kind of provisory truth emerges.

JONAH might be seen as a Rousseauist exercise in back-to-nature nostalgia, a communalist fantasy which nourishes the pipe-dream of small collectivist groups within the larger capitalist society, a kind of seventies OUR DAILY BREAD. In fact, however, the film is a critique of such solutions. The land speculators, we may assume,

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NEW GERMAN CRITIQUE is the first American journal to develop a comprehensive discussion of German politics, social theory, art, and literature on an international level.
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NEWS AND NOTES

FILM AND PHOTO LEAGUE

Add the following information to the filmography of the Film and Photo League (*Jump Cut* NO. 14). All in C. Chicago: 1) THE GREAT DEPRESSION is also in the collection of the Film Center, School of the Art Institute of Chicago. 2) 1936, CHICAGO MAY DAY: D, sc,ph,ed: Maurice Bailen. 7 min. 16mm. Extant. Newsreel of the May Day parade. 3) 1936, PEACE PARADE: D,sc,ph,ed: Maurice Bailen. 10 min. 16mm. Extant. Newsreel of a Chicago peace parade, rally, and picnic.

For the above information and the opportunity to view the film thanks to Maurice Bailen, who supplies the following list of key Chicago FPL members: John Frietag, Gordon Koster, William Kruck, John Masek, C.O. Nelson, Dr. J. Twigg. RC.

Because of the importance of the on-going struggle for national liberation and for socialism in Southern Africa, *Jump Cut* wants to publish resource material on the films on Southern Africa. We want to know about new films which have appeared in the last year and we need reviews of the main films. We want to concentrate on the accuracy and usefullness of the films. We encourage reviews of several films, say the films on Angola or South Africa. We also want short reports or articles on how people have used various of these films in their political work. Send names and sources of new films, reviews, and articles to *Jump Cut*, attention Kimberly Safford. The deadline is Oct 15, 77.

We forgot to include with Linda Gordon's review of UNION MAIDS a note saying that New Day Films distributes the film. Write for their catalogue to P.O. Box 315, Franklin Lakes, NJ 07417.

Anyone who walks into a library or book store and looks at the shelves of film criticism knows how much ephemera and sheer crap is housed there. People often depend on periodical articles, festival booklets, and occasional and conference papers for recent serious critical work. New York Zoetrope has now made some of this kind of material available. They have published 17 British Film Institute monographs, their own publications (including Dawson on Kluge's OCCASIONAL WORK OF A FEMALE SLAVE and Monaco's guides to film criticism), collections of slides by director from *L'Avant-Scene du Cinema*, and the *Take one/PMA* series, which is especially useful on Canadian film. Write for a list to 31 E. 12th Street, New York, NY 10003.

Possibly the most important recent book for independent filmmakers is *Doing it yourself: A Handbook on Independent Film Distribution* by Julia Reichert. $5.50 from the Assoc. of Independent Film and Video Makers, 99 Prince Street, New York, NY 10012.

The Educational Film Library Association has published a valuable book on distribution called *16mm Distribution*, compiled by Judith Trojan and Nadine Covert. Articles by distributors, exhibitors, filmmakers (Jerry Bruck, Jill Godmilov, Martha Coolidge), and TV people cover the whole area in a down to earth, nuts and bolts way. Appendices list periodicals which cover 16mm film, festivals and conferences, showcases and commercial theaters. EFLA, 43 W. 61st Street, New York, NY 10023. $6

The American Film Institute has $300,000 available for grants to independent filmmakers. Applications are due by Sept 15. Write Independent Filmmaker Program, Section N, AFI, 501 Doheney Rd, Beverly Hills, CA 90210.

JUMP CUT reader Roger Shatzkin sent along this photo of Christian Metz's favorite watering hole in New York City (at Eighth Ave. and 43rd Street).

Prices

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Effi Briest
The Marquise of O...
WOMEN OPPRESSED!

--Renny Harrigan

Hanna Schygulla as Effi Briest

Two 19th century German prose works dealing with the oppression of women under the guise of love and marriage and then divorce or remarriage were recently made into films: Heinrich von Kleist's novella, *The Marquise of O...* (1808) which was filmed by Erich Rohmer, and Theodor Fontane's *Effi Briest* (1894) by Rainer Fassbinder. Both films illustrate the women's lack of choice in a patriarchal society, although Rohmer's film becomes a comedy of manners while Fassbinder opts for didactic drama.

The Marquise of O... is a story of a young widow with two children living with her parents. She becomes aware that she is pregnant but has no knowledge of having had intercourse. As a matter of fact, she had been saved from rape by a group of Russian soldiers through the timely arrival of one of their officers. In an effort to provide her unborn child with a name, the Marquise places in the local paper an advertisement with an offer of marriage for the unknown assailant. The Russian officer, who meanwhile has become her less than welcome suitor, answers the ad: her savior is now her rapist. Horrified, she goes through with the mere formalities of her offer but sometime after the birth of her child she remarries the officer in real love and surrender.

Effi Briest is the more typical 19th century heroine: married to an eligible older man at the age of 17 and thoroughly bored, she starts a brief affair with another man, which is discovered 6½ years after it is over. The husband's wounded pride and sense of honor prompt him to ban Effi from the house and challenge the ex-lover to a duel. The latter dies. Later, on the one occasion she sees her child, an emotionally damaged Effi completely collapses, at which point her parents are persuaded to take her back. There she dies.

Although both films contain the material for a critical analysis of women's oppression and its application to women's experience today, the effect of each film is very different. An Upper East Side audience in New York laughed through the Rohmer film while they followed sympathetically Fassbinder's relentless portrayal of Effi's demise. Rohmer's intent is to entertain, I think, and his film is playing in first-run theaters across the country. Fassbinder's film simply opens to question the events presented. In this sense Fassbinder's is a political film which leads it, no doubt, to have only one-night screenings in "art" theaters despite the growing number of Fassbinder retrospectives and festivals. In terms of form, both films remain faithful to the original texts. In each, a deliberate narrative, created by means of voice-overs and quotes on the screen, retards the action and establishes a definite episodic structure, however, with different purposes in mind.

Rohmer--as does Kleist--leaps directly into the action: the scene opens with the newspaper advertisement being read by incredulous and amazed men at the local pub. A flashback, in the form of a narration begun by the Marquise's brother, fills in the background to the event. The virtue of the woman emerges. Her initial uneasiness and queasiness, all too familiar to her as the mother of two children already, was confirmed as pregnancy. We see first her horror and disbelief, then her soul-searching, and finally her acceptance. The character of the Marquise is played by Edith Clever of the Berlin Schaubühne as an attractive and mature woman whose rounded fullness and normally fluid movements emphasize her concrete sensuality and charm. Clever lends her character dignity and grace even in the face of general ridicule and disbelief.

Meanwhile, the Russian officer has become a persistent and impetuous suitor, much to the amusement and amazement of the whole family and to the Marquise's occasional embarrassment. Even though she has vowed never to marry again, Julietta, as she is called, declares herself at least receptive to the count's attentions. Her mother's joy indicates the pressures the young woman is under. That Julietta manages to fall in love with the count, or at least find him attractive--he is at this point a bumbling, ineffective, all-too-callow suitor--only underlines her desire for a life more to her own design. Love and marriage provide the only acceptable, "decent" response open to her if she is to realize the attraction she has felt towards him who appeared as an "angel" to her from the beginning.

Both Kleist and the filmmaker are concerned with Julietta's moral character. Rohmer inserts on the screen a title containing the sentence which provides the turning point of the original novella. When the Marquise accepts the fact of her pregnancy and is banned from her parents' home, she takes her two children with her. The decision is a particularly strong and independent one, given the mores of early 19th century Italy where the story is set. Here Kleist wrote, and Rohmer prints on the screen, "Having learned to know herself through this lovely exertion, she suddenly raised herself up, as if by her own hand, out of the total depths into which fate had thrown her." There is little doubt about her moral perfection as she proves true to her inner feelings and needs. How then reconcile the contradiction between her person and the man who raped her? How can any woman, let alone one so virtuous as the Marquise, accept in love the man who raped her? (Marriage is a different question.)

Kleist, who died in 1811 by his own hand, may have been confused about the brutality which motivates rape. Rohmer *certainly* cannot be. His very choice of subject matter here reveals itself as reactionary. Kleist seems to imply that rape was motivated by unconscious and uncontrollable love, but he also saw this love as a transgression which had to be atoned for. Rohmer is only interested in the initial attraction and follows it to what I presume is, for him, a logical conclusion: consummation of sexual attraction, here in marriage. Precisely because the Count appeared initially as an angel, he becomes the devil in the Marquise's eyes. Kleist's use of these terms repeatedly in the original is neither sentimental nor effusive but reveals Kleist's interest in real ethical questions underlying the irrationality of human behavior. Although both Kleist and Rohmer narrate the same events, it is only Kleist who emphasizes the moral choices the Count is forced to make after he has sunk to the degradation of raping an unconscious woman: he must love Julietta as an equal in his wish for marriage; he must be willing to take on her "public" disgrace by renewing his offer even *after* she places the ad; he must announce his own wrong publicly by answering the advertisement as the rapist; and he must finally prove himself her moral equal by waiting patiently and proving himself decent and trustworthy until she accepts him voluntarily sometime after the birth of their child. To be sure, the path of his repentence is shaped totally by Julietta's demands for absolute clarity, but the Count answers her demands, and his character is only possible given Kleist's erroneous assumption about the nature of rape. Kleist's novella borders repeatedly on tragedy and contains many grotesque elements. In each constellation of events the action can go either way and we are disturbed by the possible outbreak of tragedy at each new development.

With Rohmer we know the outcome from the start, from the first scene when the reader of the advertisement is incredulous and bemused. We are led to assume throughout that the course of true love never did run smooth--even Julietta's parents regard the advertisement as an artifice enabling her to secure the lover she really wants, perhaps against her will. Although by the end the mother has accepted the truth of her daughter's ignorance about her condition, the mother's matchmaker's delight when she discovers the future father's identity is expressed in her exclamation, "Of course, silly goose. Who else?" Julietta herself is the only contradiction in this network of events; only she has trouble combining savior and rapist in one person. We know that she is truly ignorant of how she became pregnant, yet the audience laughs as she agonizes about how it could have happened and who the rapist could be. We tend to forget this anguish and her horror when she discovers it is the Count, because she is clearly attracted to this man and he to her (or he wouldn't have raped her, both Kleist and Rohmer say). So it's just a matter of time before the fleeting foibles of the flesh will be sated with what they desire, which is not at all out of keeping with Rohmer's other moral tales. (People's unconquerable and appealing dependency on sexual drives or sexual fantasies seems to be at the base of CLAIRE'S KNEE, CHLOE IN THE AFTERNOON, and even MY NIGHT AT MAUDE'S.) The episodic structure of the film reflects the onlookers' cognizance of the basic assumption of the film: sexual attraction influences all the elaborate mystification and machinations of human behavior, including rape. Personally I find the theme unpalatable. A feminist interpretation could choose to regard the conclusion as yet another illustration of women's lack of choice in a patriarchal society and Julietta's necessarily self-deceptive choice of alliance with the rapist as the only way she can lead a satisfying life as a sensual person. Yet such an assumption about her self-deception would certainly be different from Rohmer's.

Judging from Rohmer's deviations from the original, I suspect he is not at all concerned with the Count's moral development. His method of making the Count palatable is through "boyish" charm and "thoughtless" impetuosity caused by "true love." Rohmer's Marquise is not raped in a faint immediately at the scene of the other attempted rape, but after she has gone to rest having drunk a sedative of an opiated tea. The fade-out shot of her sensuous body reclining on the makeshift couch is calculated, I suppose, to impel even the most judicious of men to rash deeds; an off-screen gun salvo which wakes her from her presumably exquisite slumber immediately after this is the only reminder we have of the Count's responsibility in allowing the soldiers who attempted the rape to be executed. Although Kleist's readers know exactly who the culprit is, Rohmer's do not because of two omissions and one structural change. The first omission is the Count's reported attempt to die bravely in battle (suicide is the coward's way out) with Julietta's name on his lips. In the end, Rohmer has the Count tell Julietta about a recurrent dream of a swan which he had covered with mud as a child and which always rose cleansed from its pond. The Count confesses that he confuses the Marquise with the swan, which seems obvious enough. At this point Julietta decides to marry the Count in the normally accepted full sense of the term. The most serious omission is Rohmer's deletion of the material impetus for the remarriage and thereby also the increased unspoken but obvious pressure on the Marquise to relent; a gift of 20,000 rubles to his child and a will in which its mother is made heiress of all he owns. At this juncture the Count is received into the parents' home once again, giving him their tacit acceptance as a suitor.

I do not think a prose work necessarily has to be slavishly reproduced on screen even though

the terseness and lack of psychological exposition in Kleist's prose lend themselves ideally to film and drama; however, Rohmer's changes are worth explaining because I think they reveal both his intent and the reasons for the audience reaction. It seems to me there is always potential for social criticism in art which portrays a woman confined by the injustices of patriarchal society and shows that society's mainstay is monogamous marriage, which assures the transfer of private property from one generation to the next. And the Marquise's refusal to allow her parents to denigrate her or to keep her children is a truly progressive moment in the film. But both Rohmer's treatment of his theme and his particular choice are anything but progressive.

It should come as no surprise that Julietta

Hanna Schygulla as Effi Briest

is not particularly excited about spending her life with her parents although, as a good daughter, she is there voluntarily rather than on the estate she inherited when her husband died. Although she herself could not state it in this manner, we can assume that marriage really would provide the only acceptable way she could leave home. Both the parents are preposterous in their own way. Rohmer milks them for comedy in a manner reminiscent of Moliere. The brother is simply a dolt, a foil to the Marquise's intelligence and sensitivity, the bearer of parental orders. It takes very little to push the story's comedy into a tragedy, which Kleist threatens at every turn, but Rohmer never takes us there because all the possibilities other than the one chosen are excluded from the start by the silent assumption of the film. The mother is the traditional mediator between the father and the rest of the family and a tireless matchmaker, at least if the match be under the guise rather than the actual fact of propriety. The father is domineering and petulant, possessive to the extreme: he "loses" Julietta as he had previously lost his home and given up his sword in battle with the Count. The reunion of father and daughter, set up by the mother/mediator who becomes so angry that she will have her husband's apology to Julietta, is that of two lovers; the father kisses his daughter passionately on the lips and she regresses to childish, wordless cooing on his lap. The neurotic patterns of possessive love and unresolved Oedipal conflict so common in the patriarchal nuclear family seem obvious. The father's passionate love had been equalled only by his passionate rage which he felt when he saw or thought that Julietta could have a sexual life of her own, independent of his wishes and control. His passionate response in both cases is subconscious at the deepest erotic level. Julietta has only two possibilities of liberating herself: either she can withdraw to a secluded life of chastity or she can remarry. Her rebellion against her parents is brief, isolated, contained and therefore ineffective. Unlike in the Fassbinder film, there is not the slightest hint of resignation on the part of the heroine, which has a lot to do with the intent and style of the directors.

The problem with THE MARQUISE OF O... is that even a meager rebellion on the battlefield of sexual and social politics is undermined by the silent assumption of the film which trivializes Julietta's behavior although it shows, at least for the few who don't laugh, what few choices she has. Rohmer has neutralized all the elements of social criticism by playing the material for comedy, which propels it to an apparently "happy end." The quick reversal of Julietta's decision seems almost tacked on, but it is in keeping with the way sexual attraction and rape are dealt with throughout. Kleist, it can be argued, was operating in a different context from ours, a romantic notion of the 18th century that sex was connected with the dark side, the evil side of nature. Platonic love, friendship, and sentiment ennoble humanity. The context just isn't the same for Rohmer. The Marquise is made into a woman who doesn't really know, as Rohmer does, that all she really wants is a rationalization and cover for her sexual preferences.

Fassbinder's film of Theodor Fontane's *Effi Briest* is quite different. Like Kleist, Fontane is one of the many on a "must read" list of German students everywhere but, contrary to Kleist, who was neither known nor read during his lifetime, Fontane was popular enough to be able to support himself and his family through his writing. Although readers then would have found stories of adultery and suicide in aristocratic circles shocking, Fontane's avoidance of "unnatural" or grotesque sexual and psychological implications made him less disturbing to his audience. The stereotypic story of the young neglected wife's adultery is familiar fare. At the end of the 19th century women already made up 20% of the work force in Germany, and first the Communists and then the Social Democrats had been agitating for female suffrage and protection laws in the factories for a good 30 years. However, none of this is evident in the milieu Fontane portrays. He was bourgeois in his outlook and displayed an aesthetic weakness for the aristocracy all his life.

Like Rohmer, Fassbinder has portrayed a passive, suffering heroine of the upper class--there weren't many others available if the plot was to be at all realistic--and remains faithful to his original; rather than obscure the dialectical moments of the original he has chosen to emphasize and comment on them. He immediately adds a sub-title, "A Story of Renunciation," and it is the implication of that posture of renunciation which we are directed to study. The comment Fassbinder adds, in obvious appreciation of Fontane's message, is that many who seem to accept the prevailing opinion of a society reject that opinion through their actions. The didactic technique is continuously emphasized by voices-over narrating the original text. Whereas in the Rohmer film the voices-over generally complete the action and close it to a variety of interpretations, here they illuminate the open-ended nature of the narrative and take a stand in opposition to the events. It is the same technique Fassbinder plans to use with another 19th century novel (Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben*) known for its praise of bourgeois industriousness and anti-semitism.

Effi stands as the almost perfect textbook example of someone who must capitulate to the sterile prerogatives of an aristocratic society which interests itself in rank, possession and little else. *Because* she is sympathetically portrayed, her position as a woman in a male-dominated hierarchy inherently reflects critically on the status quo (as does Julietta's). The opening image of her on a swing--also one of the last glimpses of her--abides with us; a lighthearted creature of wind and imagination, she does, as her mother says later, let herself

Edith Clever as the Marquise
Bruno Ganz as the Officer

drift with the current. Effi is asked at the age of 17 to end her childhood by marrying a suitable, established and ambitious man who had courted her mother and whom her mother had then refused for an older, more established, suitable rival. Fassbinder makes the mother's interest in such a match as obvious as did the Rohmer film, but here the mother has no antagonist. The mature Julietta had few illusions about either love or marriage. Effi's mother manipulates her daughter skillfully into a position that she herself would have envied at Effi's age: marriage to a man bound for success. The mother knows that Effi will rise to even greater heights than she through the daughter's connection with the suitor, Baron von Innstetten; Frau von Briest herself has not done so badly by her own husband, whose joviality appears a product of his unwillingness to take a risk or a definite stand on anything.

Does Effi love the man her parents have chosen? Here too she shows herself a child, for she accords him the same warmth she does to her friends and her parents. Besides, she respects him as a man of wealth and title. But she fears his moral severity and "fundamental principles." She has no real choice in the matter, nor does she think she should have, which attitude again differentiates her from Julietta who would rather not remarry, one concludes, to avoid a choice imposed by her parents. Julietta opts for life, even if it is life with the exploiter. Effi finally arrives at accepting death.

Removed to her husband Innstetten's estate in Northern Germany, Effi is presented to the social "elite" whose materialism, stupidity and provincialism Fassbinder ruthlessly details. Innstetten doesn't know how to love or appreciate his young wife and leaves her to her own devices. His strictness takes the form of pedantry and judgmental behavior. She does not have to tow the same mark he does but the fact that he regards her as a flighty and frivolous creature with only childish interests cripples her. Fassbinder uses the same sort of symbols or correlatives which Fontane did to point out the differences between them. Psychology is detailed in the settings, in the characters' reactions to things about them, rather than exclusively in their own words and actions. The mood is one of restraint which seems to prohibit the actors' speaking of themselves directly in front of the audience. A continuing conversation between Effi and her husband about the ghost of the Chinaman exemplifies how an object was used to illustrate their differences. Effi fears the noises upstairs in the house which she believes are the traces of the ghost of an exotic Chinaman who is buried in the town, exotic because of his nationality and his anonymity. Only someone with Effi's imagination and her demands for attention could believe the house is haunted but the husband takes it half seriously. He insists that Effi use this moment to test her character, and he refuses to have the blinds shortened, which would have eliminated the noise. For what would the neighbors say if he had his house remodeled to suit the fancies of his little wife? Innstetten reminds Effi of the Chinaman from time to time. He even has his housekeeper take to their new home in Berlin the seal on one of the upstairs chairs which embodies the ghost. In short, he uses Effi's fear in what her lover describes as a deliberate plan to intimidate her. The lover analyzes the situation in a way which Effi cannot, for she's still impressed by the strength and seeming moral fiber of her husband and incapable of thinking badly of anyone. Effi's impassioned "Thank God" as she learns of Innstetten's transfer to Berlin first indicates to us how real her suffering is. She knows she is neglected but accepts it as every woman's lot. Her affair disturbs her only because she has to hide it but neither does it make her feel guilty nor does she particularly want to continue it.

When Innstetten later defends his honor, he does so in the name of "that something which forms society and of which we are all a part." It doesn't matter that his society is corrupt. He must avenge his besmirched honor--even though only he and the two lovers know about the affair. Innstetten cannot satisfy himself with only the proprieties of apparent possession. He must own Effi to use or discard, a fact evidenced early in a conversation in which Innstetten said he hoped to take Effi with him when he died. At that time, Effi had pointedly and simply replied, "I am for life."

Effi appears passive, for she has no power and her sheltered existence has impeded the growth of her character. But this passivity is more properly a passive resistance. It culminates in her outburst when she sees the mindless martinet which Innstetten has made of her child, who parrots society's bankrupt values. Her pent-up resentment--in isolation--attacks Innstetten for the careerist, small-minded and mean person he has always been, concerned only with social advance and personal control. "It's always the same with people like you," Fassbinder has her add, the filmmaker's attempt to include the audience.

Effi has a physical breakdown, a concrete manifestation of her enforced capitulation. There is an undeniable, tremendous ambivalence and criticism in her resignation. She demands that her maiden name be placed on her grave (although we cannot accept her reasons for it at face value--that she had done her maiden name more honor than her married one). She had stopped growing when she married, become a mere vehicle for Innstetten's aspirations. She forgives him, she says, but her words do not have the ring either of passion or of truth, as did her attack on Innstetten described above. And the ambivalence of her forgiveness is evident: he was a fine man--as fine as one can be who is incapable of real love. These words thus criticize the very society by whose standards Innstetten is a sterling specimen.

Fassbinder, like Fontane, has made Effi lovable and irresistible and that is how Hanna Schygulla acts her in a restrained performance. Effi is naive as the young woman and knowingly saddened as the mature one, but Innstetten doesn't see the change. Just as she let herself be talked into the marriage, so too does she drift into an extra-marital relationship with her persistent pursuer. We already know from her mother that Effi has no strength to swim against the current, but where would she have had the opportunity to develop this skill in her sheltered existence? Innstetten thinks the arrival of their child will provide Effi with the plaything she needs to amuse herself. He cannot regard his wife as an equal, a type of respect which, along with love and tenderness, Effi had told her mother she wanted most out of marriage. Even those closest to the couple fail to comprehend the situation. They wear their own self-interested blinders. When Effi's mother sighs over the passing of such a "model pair," her statement represents mores governing marriage in that period and ruling class marriages in our own.

Fassbinder's camera emphasizes the repeated thematic motif of many white-light fade-outs to frame the individual scenes and emphasize their static quality. The first couple of scenes reveal or indicate the whole plot and its themes,

a narrative technique of which Fontane was very fond. Framing compositions abound: Effi, catching a glimpse of the future husband, is shot through an open door looking into a confined interior, in which she is motionless behind the bannister on the stairs. Her face appears as in a cage. The scene fades out on a stilted family tableau as Effi lays her hand in Innstetten's. As early as MERCHANT OF THE FOUR SEASONS, Fassbinder used the tableau for effective satire although here, in keeping with Fontane, his dominant tone is irony. (This is not at all the case with the MARQUISE.) Effi's departure on the wedding trip is seen through a pane of glass in the station house door, again underlining her beginning a life of even greater confinement than she had known. The camera repeatedly captures faces reflected in framed mirrors. When the person is photographed along with her/his reflection, lines of conflict seem to be indicated--Effi is reflected in a mirror where the dominant and here spectral image is Innstetten's housekeeper, who perpetuates his pedantry and manipulates Effi's fears. In another place, we see the reflection of Effi's father proclaiming for yet another time, "That's too wide a field," i.e., life is too complicated for one to take a stand. This shot signals not only Fassbinder's distance from his character but also Briest's colossal ineffectiveness.

Insofar as Fassbinder usually ruthlessly unmasks bourgeois mystifications of cruelty, and justifications for monetary and social advance, EFFI BRIEST is a film we expect of him even though its characters are aristocratic. The use of Fontane's narrative stylizes and distances the filmed material for a modern audience; its overall effect is less melodramatic than ALI or THE MERCHANT OF THE FOUR SEASONS. Fassbinder avoids in EFFI both the sentimentalizing of the main characters which occurs in ALI and the deliberate brake on audience identification with the characters in MERCHANT and in FOX AND HIS FRIENDS. Common to all these films is that social relationships have been made into commodity relationships (see Judith Mayne's article on ALI in a forthcoming issue of *New German Critique*). What I find particularly noteworthy of Fassbinder here is the subtlety and restraint of his criticism, which in no way renders it less forceful. Fontane's way is Fassbinder's--at least in EFFI BRIEST.

Both Fassbinder and Rohmer show us women's oppression and confinement, even when she is born into a privileged class. Rohmer would have us believe that a woman is satisfied with the trade-off of sex for money; his film emphasizes this assumption wherever possible. Particularly noticeable is the speed of the last sequence where the Marquise changes her mind and accepts the Count's love. Rohmer's film prohibits questioning that flimsy assumption. Julietta's other options, we must conclude, are not to be taken seriously, *because* Julietta is attacted to the Count and *because* of her own sensual nature. Even though most of us might be appalled at the implications of the conclusion, our reasons for being appalled are not to be found in the framework of the film as Rohmer presents it. Fassbinder, on the other hand, uses Fontane's narrative to question and criticize the events. Effi's resignation cannot in any way be construed as acceptance, for it contains within it Effi's moral superiority and implicit criticism of the apparent victor.

In 1984, there was perhaps no other solution to Effi's marital plight than the victim's death, yet we are startled to realize how little has changed. Women are still regarded as possessions, although their sexuality is admitted and accepted when used by its owner, who is seldom the woman herself. Assigning guilt to one person still often motivates divorce, and proving one of the parents unfit is often the only way to decide a custody battle. Children are possessions, too. The neurotic patterns created by the one-to-one exclusive relationships of the nuclear family have not changed much despite increased demands for other structures to provide childcare and nurturance. Although in the 19th century and up until the 1920's and 30's men could automatically get custody of children (Who elsehad the jobs and therefore the financial means?), today it is almost impossible for a woman to lose a custody case since the courts emphasize her role as the only "natural" parent. Joint custody is still very difficult to get. (A proposed law in Wisconsin, where I live, will make "marital misdemeanors"--formerly infidelity--irrelevant grounds for settlement, *unless*, of course, such behavior can be proven harmful to the children.)

Effi luckily had wealthy parents, and the Marquise had inherited a spare estate. Most of us, however, have inadequate welfare payments or expensive, deficient daycare and poorly paid, low-priority jobs. The age-old sexual division of labor with its traditional trade-off of child bearing, rearing and nurturing in exchange for food and shelter remains. For women in the work force the situation is only slightly better. The value of such films as EFFI BRIEST and, to a lesser extent, THE MARQUISE OF O... is that they show us situations which we clearly recognize as unjust and which in turn cause us to think about similar situations today. In so doing, we realize that the prejudices and habits which govern sexuality, reproduction and socialization of children in bourgeois society today are the same as those which dominated 19th century aristocracy. They are inherently oppressive. ■

JONAH...

Tanner's Subversive Charm *(from p.1)*

will eventually devour the produce farm, and their symbolic guerilla-theater victory over the banker (unseating him and putting a pig in his place) is clearly marked as a sepia fantasy. Mathieu ultimately goes back to work and struggle, and his final words, addressed to Jonah and to us, anticipate the day when Jonah will be involved in strike committees, until the police fire on thousands of people like him. And it is Mathieu the activist worker, rather than Max the pessimist or Marco the philosopher, who is the key political figure in the film, and it is his comments on class struggle that "frame" the film. Fired for militancy at the outset of the film, he returns to militancy at the end.

But the fundamental project of JONAH is not so much to propose a fictive model for revolution as it is to politicize the desires and perceptions of a mass public. The goal is to show that capitalist oppression is *systematic*. In our society, says Mathieu, "the better is systematically put aside." JONAH might be dismissed as a sentimental endorsement of vague and personal longings for a better life, if it did not lay such heavy stress on the systematic nature of capitalist oppression and on the ubiquity of class struggle. At the end of LA SALAMANDRE, Paul asks Rosemonde who her enemies are. She begins by hesitatingly citing those who have oppressed her most directly--her militaristic uncle, her foreman at the sausage factory, the manager of the shoe store--and then, as if undergoing a shock of recognition, she begins to spiel off the real oppressors behind the local oppressors: the army, the owners of the sausage factory, the president of the Republic. Class struggle, it is suggested, pervades every area of life in capitalist society.

The real strategy of JONAH, however, has less to do with a proposed political strategy than with a proposed way of making political films. JONAH was not made for leftists; it was made for a mass audience. It tries to appeal to what is revolutionary in most people: in all those, at least, who have no direct stake in oppression. JONAH is not, however, a sugar-coated pill, i.e. a film which gives the spectator some of the habitual satisfactions in order to make her/him swallow a left message. It is, rather, a film which maintains contact with the spectator, by its charm, by its humor, and by a certain realism, but whose process of construction favors a critical, distanced attitude on the part of the spectator.

Rather than organize itself as a linear story, JONAH orchestrates a dialectical music of ideas. The leitmotifs of Time, Nature, Work and Education are sounded early and keep coming back. Marco's inaugural lecture to his class initiates many of the central themes. Although Pauline Kael calls it "woozy" and "impenetrable," his lecture is in fact quite coherent. Using blood sausages (his father is a butcher) and a metronome (his mother sang operetta) as visual aids, Marco offers a disquisition on the historical evolution of the notion of time. While agricultural societies were bound to the cycles and rhythms of the seasons, he says, capitalism brought with it the notion of time as a superhighway, a linear progression. Time became Progress. But it was the "winners" of history--the conquerors--who first formulated the idea of Progress. Then Marco imagistically evokes the

Marie (Miou-Miou) and Marco (Jacques Devis)

historical horrors of capitalist expansion into what we now call the Third World. The capitalists, turned into corkscrews, opened up the bottles of "inferior" cultures and drank them to the dregs. (One need only think of the Spanish plundering Inca silver or the British taking African ivory.) Their thirst satisfied, they broke the bottles. But the "winners" of history, and here we see a veiled allusion to the liberation struggles of the Third World, fear that this past might come back to haunt them. While believing in the straight and inexorable superhighway of Progress, they fear the savages displaced by its construction (one visualizes the Transamazonic Highway, where the image literally applies). Marco then links this idea of the past, weighing like a nightmare on the capitalist brain, with the students' personal histories. They too are an evolving creation of their own past; they are now "reading" the messages stored in their own chromosomes, just as Marco himself is the synthesis, in some sense, of his father (the sausage) and his mother (the metronome). Marco ends the class by beating out a series of rhythms: opposition creates time, just as class struggle motivates history. Marco's lecture, far from being "woozy," constitutes a lyrical version of the dialectic wrapped in a philosophical meditation and expressed in images. JONAH as a whole elaborates the leitmotifs of Marco's lecture. The banker Vendeouvres (etymologically "seller of works" and phonetically "wind of works") and his agents, as the provisionary winners of history, speak the language of Progress and Domination: "We are no longer in the Middle Ages...You can't stop the economy...The city is developing...." Social Darwinists, they fancy themselves strong by intrinsic right. The produce farmers and their allies, on the other hand, are Europe's indigenous "savages" who besiege and harass the agents of capitalist Progress. When the bank's agent visits Marguerite and Marcel in order to soften them up for an eventual land takeover, one of the farmhands--described by Marguerite as a "bit savage"--threatens to cannibalize him. And Jonah, like the Emile of the film's closing Rousseau quotation, will be a new kind of savage: "a savage made to live in the cities."

Marco's lecture, in which apparent discontinuities mask real continuities, microcosmically typifies the film's methods, for JONAH as a whole mocks the temporal strategies--the linear progression--of conventional fiction films. The opening sequences alert us to JONAH's unorthodox narrative procedures: after the credits, we see a man (Max) enter a smoke shop and ask for cigarettes. He pays 1 Franc 90 for them and grumbles about inflation. An anachronistic intertitle--

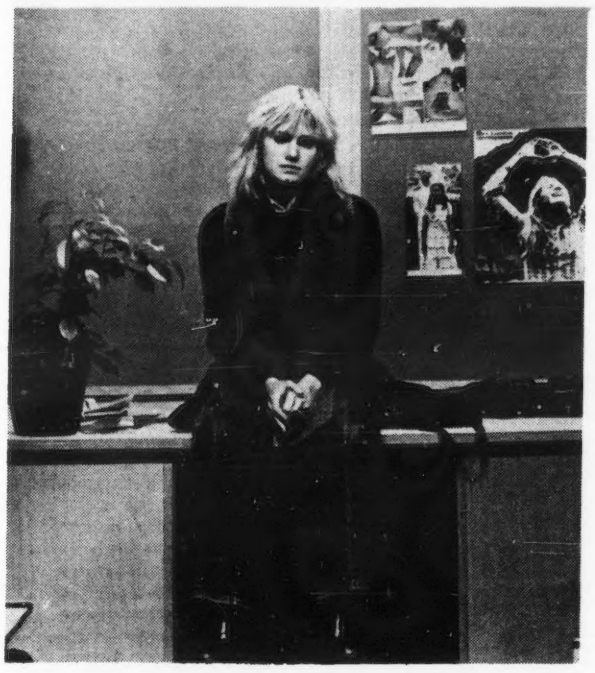
"The Next Afternoon"--is followed by a shot of a statue of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. An off-screen voice (if a mute statue can be said to be "off") recites the celebrated passage from Rousseau's *Social Contract*, in which the philosopher asserts that most people live and die in slavery: "As children they are wrapped in diapers and when they die they are nailed into a coffin. So long as they live they are enchained by institutions." Tanner incongruously couples two irreconcilable kinds of temporality--the temporality of contemporary Geneva and the temporality of a Rousseau quotation--with the absurd intertitle "The Next Afternoon." It is as meaningless to speak of "the day before a Rousseau quotation" as it is to imply, as occurs in Dali-Bunuel's UN CHIEN ANDALOU, "eight years after once upon a time." In both cases, the intertitles highlight the artificiality of cinematic time--historical time and narrative time are as arbitrary in their slicing up as the links of a sausage--and bid us pay attention to something other than a linear story.

The opening sequences also introduce two major themes of the film: inflation (the same cigarettes cost 2 Francs 30 by the end of the film)--and the oppressive nature of social convention. But rather than regard these two subjects--inflation and oppressive conventions--as separate, JONAH shows their interconnection, by exposing the economic *dimension* of social oppression. Providing audio-visual object lessons in Marxist concepts, the film repeatedly underscores the alienation of labor in capitalist society. They're eating us up, Mathieu tells Mathilde; they suck surplus value out of us, and when they're finished, they throw us in the street. In capitalist society, people sell their labor. "I am labor," says Mathieu, "and therefore for rent." But JONAH not only exposes alienation; it also offers a structural critique of the capitalist system. Marco, ashamed of his inability to explain inflation to his students, has Mathieu offer a guest lecture on the subject. Mathieu makes a powerfully lucid analysis of the crises and contradictions within capitalism. The capitalist system, he argues, citing the stage-managed oil crisis as an example, simultaneously requires crises and is threatened by them. It needs unemployment, to maintain the working class in a state of fear and pitted one against the other. But at the same time, unemployment is dangerous, potentially leading to despair, depression, war.

Bourgeois thought compartmentalizes experiences into neatly ordered and immaculately separated categories--Economics, Politics, Education, Ecology--with the result that the sense of social totality is lost. Such intellectual borders, frontiers, and conventions also oppress us. Marco, paraphrasing the French leftist rallying cry for the German-born student leader Cohn-Bendit ("We are all German Jews") shouts: "We are all frontier cases." JONAH collapses categories and violates frontiers, passing by them as if they did not exist. Marie's situation, in this sense, is emblematic of the oppressive nature of borders. She works in Switzerland but is required by citizenship law to sleep in France. Here again segmentations, geographical in this case, are shown to be unnatural. But intellectual borders oppress as well, for example the border that separates economics and sexuality. Marie tells Marco's students that she occasionally hitchhikes to work in order to save money, but that she prefers not to because the men who pick her up harass her sexually. When a student interjects "*some* men," Marie insists that it involves men generally, that it is systematic. Conclusion: Economic necessity forces Marie to hitchhike; (male) capitalist power oppresses her in both the sexual and the economic realms. Men are likely to bother her, not because of some natural instinct, but because the sexual distribution of power favors such abuses.

JONAH displays an almost Melvillean awareness of the ecological interconnectedness of all phenomena. "O Nature, and O soul of man," Melville wrote in *his* whale story, "how far beyond all utterance are your linked analogies!" JONAH unearths the linked analogies of which Melville speaks. Marco, contemplating a halved cabbage, notes its resemblance to the twin lobes of the brain. Like Melville, Tanner creates a kind of metaphysical poetry whereby dissimilar entities are joined and occult resemblances suggested. Just as *Moby Dick* is supernatural and earthy, metaphysical and physical, full of Plato as well as whale sperm, so JONAH is whimsically fantastic *and* rooted in the Swiss earth, flush with vegetables, onions, manure. Whales, furthermore, are frequently mentioned in the film. Human beings kill them for lipstick, Marcel observes, while the shrimp that whales usually eat go uneaten, so that people, left with nothing but shrimp to eat, will eventually die of indigestion. Whales are not only material for lipstick, they are communicators (sending out coded messages) and musicians (Mathieu's pupils sing along with their cries). And Jonah, like his Biblical namesake, is to be vomited up by his whale, the twentieth century.

While audaciously "collapsing" conventionally separated realms, JONAH also overturns implicitly respected hierarchies: adults over children, work over play, "high" art over "low" art. In an inversion of roles it is Mathieu who asks the children a series of "infantile" questions: "Does the wind feel the clouds? Can water feel? Does the sun know it's called the sun?" Adults, the film implies, should never stop asking the irrepressible "why" questions that children ask. The film also shows that work can be frivolous and play serious. The work of the produce farm is often a kind of



Marie being questioned by Marco's students

play ("I'm the king of shit," says Mathieu atop a mountain of manure), as is work in the classroom. Art, meanwhile, is both work *and* play.

JONAH demystifies high art. Rather than something special and exalted, frozen into monuments and artifacts, art is shown to form part of the process of everyday life. JONAH locates art everywhere--in a casual pun, a stylized gesture, an eloquent statement, a well-sung song. In a more politicized version of the surrealist vision of the artistic potentialities of all human beings, the film is peopled by artists of the everyday. Mathieu (borrowing from Pablo Neruda) sings the democratic virtues of the onion; Marcel photographs animals in order to draw them afterward; Marguerite hawks her vegetables with poems; Mathilde poetizes her pregnancy; Marie and Charles reenact memories in song, dance, and sketch. Life in JONAH constantly transforms itself into creative, self-determining play. Everything--a tick, a whale, a name, a word--yields a pretext for a story or a song. And much of the art is collective, consisting of group improvisations.

One sequence in which the children collectively paint a mural, using the adults as models, demonstrates both the collaborative nature of art and the absurdity of the high art/low art distinction. The mural simultaneously resembles a medieval fresco in which Max, the puritanical militant, is crucified like Christ, and a pop tableau of contemporary life. Emblematic of the film as a whole, the mural sequence shows children and adults collaborating on a work of art which is neither high nor low, which is at once representational (the children outline the adult bodies against the wall) and stylized, just as JONAH itself is representational and stylized, realistic and fantastic. The sequence is visual, verbal, and musical (in the mock-dirge that the adults improvise). Its text, to switch to semiological language, is sensorially composite, mobilizing diverse matters of expression, like JONAH itself. The film's final freeze-frame catches Jonah, revolutionary and cineaste of the future, chalking over the brightly colored mural. Individual works of art are ephemeral and time-bound, but the process of art goes on.

If JONAH demystifies art, it also demystifies history. Rather than being grand and remote, the exclusive province of emperors and generals, history is shown to be the very stuff of our everyday life. Charles is surprised that Marco is interested in his old train stories. "Of course," replies Marco, "I'm a history teacher." We are history, its subjects and its objects, and we should all be, to echo TOUT VA BIEN, our own historians. ("Imperial Rome is full of arcs of triumph" Brecht wrote in *A Worker Reads History*, "Who reared them up? Over whom did the Caesars triumph?) The film's title, JONAH WHO WILL BE 25 IN THE YEAR 2000, spotlights our own immersion in historical time. This period is our segment, our sausage-link, as it were, of history, and we will probably share it with Jonah. Mathieu wishes Marco's students, and indirectly the spectators, a long and happy life; he hopes they are all alive and well in the year 2000. His words are followed by a cut to the same classroom, this time in black and white, inhabited by elderly people, presumably the same students grown older. Our minds flash forward to the year 2000. Time and history are deposited in our reluctant spectatorial laps. What will we, alone and together, have accomplished in the intervening years? The film encourages us not only to understand time but to seize it and change it.

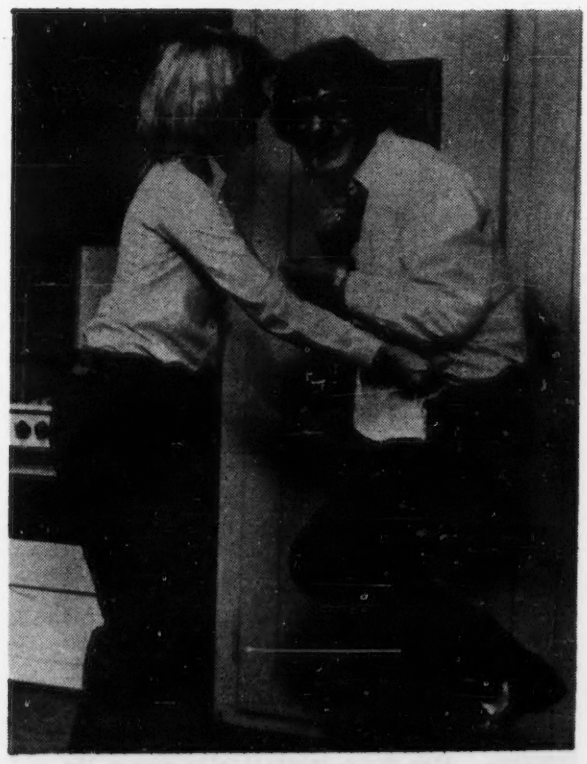
A Brechtian ode to the thrill of comprehension and the joy of learning, JONAH shows people learning throughout their lives. Children learn to draw and sing; they master Boolean algebra and mimic the cries of whales. Everyone can learn, even the very old, and Marco, not accidentally, winds up teaching in a home for the elderly. Like Brecht, Tanner sees life "under the sign of" education, and JONAH, like many of Brecht's plays (*Galileo*, *The Mother*) proliferates in the classroom scenes. In many shots, we find ourselves ranged as spectator-learners behind the students on the screen. But the film is designed less to inculcate specific didactic truths than to teach people *how to learn*. The classroom becomes the scene of two activities frowned upon in conventional schools: thought and laughter. Not only can anything be taught in class (Mathieu speaks of inflation, Marie of cashiering), but learning can take place anywhere, such as in a greenhouse school, or even in the cinema.

By positing alternative kinds of learning, JONAH exposes the oppressive class-bound nature of the school as a key ideological apparatus of the bourgeois state. The school is the institution which mediates between the playful egalitarian games of childhood and the rigidities of the social and economic structure. Administratively obliged to give grades and stimulate the competitive spirit, Marco partially outwits the system by grading the students not on their answers but on the quality of their questions. He also learns from them. They teach him, for example, the principle of reciprocity. Asked to reveal their desires, they insist that he be equally ready to expose his own. While present-day schools have little place for truth ("truth at school?" Mathieu asks skeptically) or joy or reciprocity, JONAH evokes the potentially inexhaustible charm and ongoing delight of what Brecht called "cheerful and militant learning."

JONAH is reminiscent, at least to this viewer, of another "school film," Jean Vigo's anarchist masterpiece, ZERO FOR CONDUCT. Marco's classroom is graced with a wall poster of Chaplin, whose cake-walk the sympathetic teacher Huguet imitates in the Vigo film. In a world where school becomes a microcosm of societal oppression and hierarchy, silent comedy calls up a realm of freedom from arbitrary authority. The Tanner film even "quotes" a camera movement from ZERO FOR CONDUCT. In the Vigo film the camera tracks around the class as the midget-principal declaims with demented fervor. The camera tracks to the back of the class, picking up the bored indifference of the students. It pauses, then retraces its path to the front. Tanner uses a similar tracking shot at two points in JONAH--during Marco's lecture on time and Mathieu's lecture on inflation. The shots point up a contrast, since the students look less hostile than they do in Vigo, but they also suggest a similarity. The oppressive situation satirized in Vigo's film has not really changed as long as classes are structured in the say way; that is, a teacher pontificating to students arranged in rows. Interestingly, Marco's students become progressively more active throughout the film as authority withers away to make way for participatory learning. The student reaction to Mathieu's lecture on the other hand, seems bored and impatient, as if Tanner were commenting on the ineffectiveness of purely didactic films.

Brecht's theater, as Walter Benjamin paradoxically put it, "advances by interruptions;" it juxtaposes autonomous scenes rather than develops a causally coherent narrative flow. JONAH, similarly, segments itself into over two-score sequences, sketches, quotations, songs. The narrative line self-consciously exhibits its own kinks and knots, the continuity disrupted not only by intertitles but also by the intrusion (twenty-one times by my count) of black-and-white footage, often ushered in by minor jazz chords heralding a shift in mode. These monochrome interludes are very diversely used; they are often suggestive and occasionally unclear. One sequence interrupts Marco's lecture on time. Max takes a pistol, aims at his image in the mirror, and then shoots an alarm clock. Is he symbolically threatening art as a reflection, shattering temporal continuity in the cinema, exploding the continuum of bourgeois history, taking armed revolt against the arbitrary segmentations of clock-time in Switzerland, the manufacturing home of watches and cuckoo clocks?

All the black-white sequences have some oblique or fantastic relation to the real posited by the story. They realize a wish or name a fear. Some are brief excursions into life-as-it-should-be rather than as it is. Mathieu gets to look at the books of his employer. The adults get to play in the mud like so many happy porcine children. Marguerite gets to confront her bank-



er-enemy with his ignoble double, a pig. The cold impersonality of a TV newscaster melts into relaxed gestures and warm personal words addressed to Mathilde seated before her set. Another fantasy sequence is only retroactively clarified. When Madeleine speaks of tantric rites involving naked bodies and impure food, we retroactively comprehend her fantasy-vision of her office-mates participating in such rites. Still other sequences constitute historical flashbacks, including the 1932 army occupation of Geneva. There are also fictional flash-forwards, as when Mathieu wishes Marco's students long and happy lives. One sequence is especially striking for its political ambiguities. Max's melancholy lament that "politics are finished" precedes shots of military parades in Moscow's Red Square. In Makavejev's WR, such footage slyly insinuates a link between militarism and sexual repression. Here, however, since we know Max has an elephantine memory for past political betrayals, we wonder if Tanner is not presenting a disenchanted Trotskyist's version of *why* politics are finished, i.e., because of Stalinism.

In still another black-white interlude the hitchhiking Marie is picked up by a clean-cut young man who urges her to sit in the front seat. Marie bursts into a satirical cabaret-style ditty: "If you save your money you'll never be in debt/ Stay cold and never fall in love and you'll never burn to ash/ Kiss the ass of those who kick you and you won't have to worry about getting whipped/ Crawl close to the ground and there will be no danger of crashing." Her song burlesques the tight-fisted prudence of the *petit bourgeois* and her final query constitutes a sarcastically indirect refusal of an implied sexual proposition: "What made you think you could fly?"

The Brechtian theory of alienation and the alienation-effect, Tanner told *Cineaste* (6:4), form the basis of his film language. The black-white interludes, while unevenly successful, clearly do distance and "derail" the narrative. And JONAH generally is imbued with the Brechtian esthetic, since in its episodic juxtaposition of sketches, each is conceived as a little theatrical "act," in the fugue-like presentation of its characters and the alliterative stylization of their names, in its archaic intertitles and its still photographs. The songs that dot the narration recall the dissonant bittersweet ballads of Kurt Weill, and the frequent discontinuity between music and image effects a typically Brechtian "separation of the elements." The music gains a certain autonomy by being dissociated from the emotional tone of the dramatic moment. Rather than direct our emotions in the manner of psychic traffic cops, as in so many Hollywood films, the music structures, segments, and punctuates the filmic discourse.

Several sequences recall Godard as well as Brecht. Marie, home from jail, play-acts her prison experiences with Charles. When he plays a male prisonmate, she objects that there *were* no male prisoners. Then he mimes the ritual solemnity of a priest, but she complains that his gestures are all wrong. Charles finally opts for a Shakespearean solution; he plays the role of the prison itself by clasping his hands in front of his face in order to represent a "wall." Brechtian in its minimalist approach to decor, Charles' solution implies that one need not literally reconstitute a wall; one need only "signify" it. More importantly, the sequence (like a similar sequence in TOUT VA BIEN where the workers debate how to convey the visceral feelings associated with their everyday working lives) confronts us with the problematic narrative and esthetic choices involved in artistic representation.

JONAH abounds in aural and visual echoes of Godard. Pendulum-like lateral tracking shots stalk the conversation of Madeleine and Max, as they did for Paul and Camille in CONTEMPT. Marie's undercharging of customers in a metallically pastel supermarket recalls the shoplifting rampage in TOUT VA BIEN. The citations of Rousseau's *Emile* (Godard is also Swiss) pay hommage to LE GAI SAVOIR. The playful bursting into song by decidedly non-professional singers evokes PIERROT LE FOU, and the recited quotations from Rousseau, Piaget, Paz and Neruda, hark back to a similar practice in virtually all Godard films. JONAH is not, however, second-hand Godard. In many ways Tanner does quietly what Godard does more obtrusively. His self-reflexive techniques, like his colors, are more muted. "You don't see the camera," Tanner said of his own MIDDLE OF THE WORLD, "But you hear it running." The editing in JONAH is subtly "visible;" shots are held just a little too long or cut just a little too abruptly. The camera movements, rather than completely autonomous, are minutely displaced. The camera moves slightly when the personnages do not, anticipating or trailing behind the movement in the shots. The passages between shots are often quietly startling. An extreme long-shot of Mathieu on his bicycle, for example, cuts to alternating close-ups of his face and a red light.

A film, as Tanner himself has pointed out, resembles its process of production. In JONAH, one senses a playful, egalitarian, communitarian atmosphere. One is struck, furthermore, by the absence of a hierarchy of stars. None of the principals (long-jawed Mathieu, freckly Marie, saggy Max, buck-toothed Madeleine, tubby Marco) is conventionally movie-star attractive. (Pauline Kael, characteristically scouting for star material, singles out the special magic of Miou-Miou). They are not immortal kings and queens of the screen; they are actors playing normally inept everyday people like ourselves.

Mathieu (Rufus) as radical pedagogue

Working with synchronous sound and long takes, Tanner gives his actors room to breathe and the space to interact. JONAH is structured around roughly one-hundred and fifty one-shot sequences (sequences basically composed of one continuous shot) plus a sprinkling of close-ups. Such sequences allow the actors to spread their wings, unlike conventional practice where an hour might pass (devoted to adjusting lighting, experimenting with set-ups) between the question of one character and the answer of another. At first glance, Tanner's method would seem to reinforce conventional realism by avoiding the fragmentation that goes with montage. In fact, however, it has a contrary effect, precisely because spectators are accustomed to "invisible" montage and fabricated continuity. Shots which literally respect the spatial and temporal unity of the scene create, paradoxically, an effect of unreality and alienation.

Tanner extends the lessons of Godard in very personal, innovative, and in some ways more sympathetic directions. I have spoken of the film's subversive qualities, but what about its charm? What are its strategies for winning people to a left position? It is here that the film breaks new ground. JONAH refuses, and dialectically transcends, the sterile dilemma of pure deconstruction (films which avoid narrative and render identification impossible, like LE GAI SAVOIR) versus populist melodrama like Z. Instead, JONAH explores new routes into the spectator's mind and psyche. In words superficially addressed to the other characters, but really aimed at the spectator, Mathieu speaks of unifying the field of our desires, finding their common thread, and using them as levers. "Capitalism survives," John Berger wrote in *Ways of Seeing*, "by forcing the majority, whom it exploits, to define their own interests as narrowly as possible." Previously achieved by means of extensive deprivation, he continues, "today in the developed countries it is being achieved by imposing a false standard of what is and what is not desirable." JONAH attempts a redefinition of the desirable. Using our desires as levers, JONAH appeals to deeply-rooted but socially frustrated aspirations, including the desire for intimacy, for new modes of work, for warmth, for festivity, for community, for freedom. Too many left films play on guilt or appeal purely to the intelligence. JONAH tries to think through the social logic of our desires even while it demystifies the political and ideological structures that channel our desires in oppressive directions.

It is one thing to use our desires as levers; it is another to flatter and indulge our fantasies. We on the left, after all, also have fantasies. Sitting in movie theaters in New York, San Francisco, or Boston, we like to imagine ourselves Third World, or "First World," revolutionaries. We are tempted to ask films to stage the revolution for us. JONAH, for its part, does not encourage facile identification with idealized personnages. It largely refuses the constant flow of identification via the ongoing exchange of glances by which conventional films plug us into the psychological and diegetic momentum of the story. JONAH does, unlike deconstruction films, favor a certain kind of identification, but it is not with individuals, on the one hand, or with anything as abstract as "the masses" or "the working class" on the other. Rather, we identify with the ideas of a group in struggle which is groping, like the rest of us, toward solidarity. We identify with eight characters (nine including Charles) and their children. We identify, in short, with a community of aspiration.

Deconstruction films, and deconstruction theory, performed an invaluable service by unmasking the ideology implicit in certain bourgeois forms and denouncing the potential for exploitation resulting from conventional character identification situations. The work of deconstruction, as Godard's NUMERO DEUX amply demonstrates, is important and should go on. At the same time, however, the cinema can move beyond deconstruction into non-exploitative identification and self-critical narration. It is utterly futile to condemn stories as such. Human beings need and love stories. That is why they tell each other stories when they are awake and tell themselves dreams when they are asleep. Stories are not the enemy, but alienated dreams are. It is all very fine to demystify film and denounce Hollywood escapism, but we must also determine why people go to films. People are not forced at gunpoint to submit to their own cinematic exploitation. They go gladly to the slaughter. A film like JONAH crystallizes and actualizes our desires even while it criticizes them. It follows the way pointed by Brecht: to dream, to tell stories, but at the same time to step out of the story and criticize it. Distancing is effective, after all, only if there is something such as an emotion or a desire to *be* distanced. It is of no value for films (or revolutions) to be "correct" if no one is interested in participating in them.

1.JONAH also makes a cinematic whale-quotation. Jonah's birth is prefaced by some footage of whales cavorting in the waves. One is reminded that Tanner began his film career working with Karl Reisz, whose MORGAN recurrently juxtaposes human love-making with animal play. ■

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Jonah...

Subversive Charm Indeed!

--Linda Greene, John Hess, and Robin Lakes

Alain Tanner's JONAH, in spite of fairly short runs in art houses and in university towns, has had a marked impact on radical intellectuals. Bob Stam, in this issue of *JUMP CUT* and Todd Gitlin in *Film Quarterly* (30:3, Spring, 1977) celebrate the film's warmth, charm, optimism, and intelligence, seeing it as a valuable contribution to radical film and politics. It seems to us that both of them miss or choose to ignore how bad the film's politics really are. Because we enjoyed the film and agree with some of their positive assessments, we see this essay as a corrective, not as a complete review of the film. But before we begin to polemicize, we want to try to get at why so many people liked the film so uncritically.

To begin with, the film really does have charm. The kind of warm communality that gathers around the farmhouse strikes a responsive chord in all of us isolated and alienated intellectuals. At various times we have all lived in houses with other people and know how great making and eating the evening meal can be.

Tanner's characters are irrepressible, energetic, playful, and funny. In the grim mid-70s, when many people have begun to wonder about the possibility of human exuberance and creativity, Tanner's faith understandably makes us feel good. It's damned hard to feel very good about much of anything when decaying capitalism seems so very bent on destroying as much human life as possible before it goes under, and when we are surrounded by hypocritical and vicious politicians, businessmen, and administrators talking human freedom out of one side of their mealy mouths and ordering the destruction of life and dreams out of the other. No wonder Tanner's joy and optimism pleases us.

But let's look a little further. During the 1960s many intellectuals and artists were drawn into the various mass movements against racism, sexism, and the war. As that movement receded, it left many participants, who had neither deep roots in the working class nor ties to the organized left, high and dry. Many former activists became disenchanted observers and dropouts who looked nostalgically on the '60s as the good old days. It's no accident that recent years have produced films such as TOUT VA BIEN (Gorin/Godard, 1972), MILESTONES (Kramer/Douglas, 1975: see *JUMP CUT* No. 10/11), and JONAH. Political work often seems dull and routine (and often is), especially when no movement surrounds it. We think JONAH speaks to that nostalgia, telling people who are honestly confused that it is all right to drop out and put your hope in your children and that you can stay away from the left, the working class, and routine work and still feel good about yourself.

So while we see perfectly legitimate reasons why radicals today like this film, we think too many of the film's admirers have closed their eyes to other aspects of it. We think the intensity of Stam's and Gitlin's justifications of the film arise out of an uneasy feeling that the film needs it.

Basically, we think JONAH is a light-weight, slightly progressive, warm, and charming film in which petty bourgeois actors and actresses pretend to be workers and peasants but fail because neither they nor Tanner knows much about the daily lives of Swiss workers. The film shows nothing of the Swiss working class extended families, their hard day's work, their concern for craft and for doing the job well, their weekend outings, the housewives' oppressed conditions, working class fraternal organizations, workers' concern for regularity and respectibility, their insecurity about money and jobs, their racism and their militancy, their ubiquitious TV sets. The characters Tanner puts on the screen, whether intended as mythic, symbolic, poetic, realistic, or ironic images, bear little or no resemblance to the European working class. If you want to see what Tanner thinks of them, look at "The Two Zeros."

Tanner's isolated, alienated, disenchanted, but somehow optimistic characters flounder around in search of some sort of personally liberating lifestyle; that search distinguishes them even further from the European working class and peasantry. Tanner's film is radical in the same sense that taking off your clothes in public is radical. It bothers people's conventional values, and they will react against it, but it does not threaten capitalism at all. In fact, if capitalists think they can make money from it, they will step down out of their offices and invest.

The political frenzy of the late '60s has burned out the film's main characters and, despairing of political activity, they have retreated to the country for rejuvenation. Uncommitted to ongoing political struggle, they have turned to the future (children) as the only hope. Cut adrift from the organized left and the working class, with which some of them have at least nominal ties, they seek some small, personal way to do something political for their own moral self-satisfaction--to make them better people.

But this is a politics of, by, and for those people who wistfully regret the wonderful days of their youth and fail or refuse to grasp that left politics is hard, day-to-day, routine work with groups of people, work one expects to last a long time. Doing political work is very different from indulging in faintly political sentiments and lots of wishful thinking.

In this regard, Tanner ignores the fact that most of the people involved in militant struggle today *have no choice but to do so*. Workers with families and debts have to fight for their jobs and more pay. It's clear from watching films such as SALT OF THE EARTH and HARLAN COUNTY, USA that those workers didn't decide to strike for moral reasons but out of the need to survive. But the characters in JONAH do have a choice (or at least Tanner gives them that choice), because of their petty privileges.

Let's look at the eight characters Tanner has created in terms of their class affiliations, main concerns, and past and present political activity. The main locus of the film's action is Marguerite and Marcel's farm. Marguerite's primary concern is to run an efficient organic farm and have sex

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with the foreign workers who are housed in nearby barracks. Because Mathieu's Rousseau-esque school becomes a financial burden, she closes it down without regret. Marcel, who appears to talk more than work on the farm (no doubt because of his privileged position as co-owner), is into ecology, especially saving whales (a crucial issue in Switzerland). Although Marcel does seem politically aware in the scene with the land speculator (what European small landowner isn't in that situation?), there is not a shred of evidence that he ever participated in any progressive political activity, or ever will. He and Marguerite are small landowners, historically one of the most reactionary elements in Europe. In spite of their mod interests, whales and organic gardening, there is no reason to believe they will transcend their class interests. In fact, they pay very low wages and call their workers "animals" and "zeros:" just what one would expect.

Max is the disillusioned Trotskyist who works as a proofreader and gambles on the side. By warning the farmers about the bank's plans to get their land, Max demonstrates that he still has a spark of revolt in him. But since he does not even attempt to organize others against the bank, his act is simply a personal, moral gesture, having little or nothing to do with politics. We don't learn much about his past political work, his political ideas (there are different trotskyists--is he still a member of anything, was he ever?), or how and why he became disillusioned. His history is left out and he becomes in the film, as the children's mural clearly shows, the emblematic, disabused idealist who suffers symbolic martyrdom at the hands of Mathieu's students.

What does it mean that Tanner makes the only person with a connection to the left into a tired, saggy, up-tight gambler whom the children, who are more perceptive than adults in matters of politics in Tanner's world, choose to crucify? This symbolic level of the film, reinforced by Marco's natural cycles, Marcel's animal worship, and all the women's overwhelming sexuality, strongly urges us to turn away from revolutionary theory and politics toward self-development, from rational thought to sentiment and feeling. Tanner crucifies revolutionary theory on the alter of the heart, thus eliminating most political work and class struggle. Rousseau has triumphed over Marx.

This is nowhere clearer than in the Madeleine/Max relationship. As an antidote to his fast-fading Trotskyism, she offers mysticism, kicks and sex. What Max needs, she is saying, is to clear his head of all this Marxist nonsense and have a good fuck (which she willingly supplies). Tanner falsely sets up a dichotomy between thought and feeling, and he stacks the deck against thought. It's true, we think that Tanner also makes fun of Madeleine's sexual tantraism, but only insofar as he denigrates all the women in the film.

This dichotomy returns in the Marco/Marie relationship. He is the isolated, pent-up, egotistical intellectual/teacher who is turned on by bouncy, spacy Marie, who finally fulfills his great sexual fantasy by bringing into their bed a woman who was in jail with her. Marco is a well-meaning fool who spouts elitist but progressive lectures to his uncomprehending students but does not organize the teachers and students to change the institution he complains about and to protect his job.

Likewise, Marie's "political activity" is an individualistic rebelliousness, a politics of sentiment, not of the mind. Rather than organize other workers in the supermarket, other French guest workers in Switzerland, or the old people who can't afford to eat well, she cheats the store where she works and ends up, as she must, in jail. All she seems to have learned from this experience is how better to fulfill Marco's sexual fantasies (*obviously* a model for progressive women in search of political work).

Mathieu and Mathilde both work in factories at first, although he is a skilled craftsperson, a typesetter, one of a group of European workers who have tended to struggle to maintain their own privileged position within the working class rather than for the working class as a whole. Clearly, this alone does not discredit Matthieu, but it does raise questions and doesn't allow us to accept his political work and union activity as automatically progressive. As with Max, Tanner denies us the information we need to assess Matthieu's politics--past, present, and future. Tanner forces us to approve Matthieu's political work on sentimental, moral grounds, not because we know something about it. Mathilde has also been a factory worker, but throughout the film her only spoken desire is to "fill" herself "with child." She finally gets her wish: she gives birth to Jonah.

At the end of the film, Mathieu returns to the factory, determined to struggle so that there will be a better world for Jonah when he grows up. While probably the most positive moment in the film, because it is devoid of any intellectual framework by which we can assess it, Tanner gives us only sentiment and good intentions. We have no reason to believe that Mathieu's concern centers on the working class and not his craft, on groups and not individuals.

No amount of celebration can cover up the blatant, inexcusable sexism of this film. Not one of the women has any political consciousness at all beyond infantile rebelliousness. All undergo negative changes personally in the film: Mathilde from factory worker to earth mother; Marie from rebellious worker to fulfiller of male sexual fantasies; Marguerite from someone willing to experiment with the school on her farm to someone who closes it down without regret when it becomes a financial burden; and Madeleine from rebellious secretary to sex goddess.

Although the men all have some interest beyond themselves that gives them some dimension as characters, the women, except perhaps for the petty

capitalist Marguerite, are stereotypes and have no interests beyond their own reproductive organs. There is not a shred of feminist consciousness among these four. Switzerland may be backward and lack a women's movement, but while Tanner was making this film, hundreds of thousands of women in Italy and Portugal were taking part in mass movements, as women for women's rights and as leftists for socialism. The French, English, and North American literature of women's liberation graces the shelves of Geneva's multi-lingual bookstores. Tanner can claim any excuse he wants, but he has made a movie that shows complete ignorance of women's struggles over the last 10 to 15 years.

If possible, even more offensive is Tanner's shabby treatment of the foreign workers from the Mediterranean countries. And damn it, John Berger, Tanner's script writer, should know better: he put out a book on these exploited and brutalized people (*The Seventh Man*, Viking, 1975). Berger's title refers to the fact that every seventh man in Europe is a foreign worker, and Switzerland has its share of these 20th century slaves. They are treated like cattle, have few if any legal rights or public services, may not bring their families into or become citizens of the host countries, do all the hard and dirty work, and are sent home when business turns down.

What does Tanner do with them? While raising great sympathy for poor Marie, who must travel a few miles to and from work in Switzerland, he completely reinforces all the vicious Swiss stereotypes about foreign workers. Since none become characters who speak for themselves, they remain furtive, mysterious, inhuman figures seen from a distance. Since Marguerite slips off to have sex with them, Tanner reinforces the idea that all they want to do is fuck upright Swiss women. Imagine the effect on a white American audience if the female lead in a film slipped off to have sex with blacks in a nearby shantytown! Would that help the audience understand the lot of blacks or sympathize with black people? Or would it increase racism?

Tanner shows some stills of squalid rooms in which foreign workers live (leftover photos from Berger's book?). Rather than bring these workers' plight out into the open and make it a political issue, he handles it in such a way that he only reinforces Swiss ideas about how unclean and disorderly these people are. If Tanner means this as protest, which he might, then it is an utter failure, a wimpy, timid protest in line with the film's overall politics.

Tanner's film, according to Stam, "rigorously situates its characters within the social and economic landscape" of contemporary Switzerland. We've already shown that this is not quite true. It seems to us that because Tanner concentrates on individuals, the social and economic landscape is very pale, static, and abstract. For example, Swiss capitalism seems to roll over its individualistic opposition without a problem; it appears as an inexorable force without internal contradictions.

In fact, there is little presentation of Swiss social reality in the film and no reason to know that the film takes place in Switzerland and not in France or in some other European country. There is no mention or evidence of a Swiss labor movement (except Mathieu's references), a women's movement, the controversy raging in Switzerland about foreign workers (a Swiss purity movement has grown up, demanding the expulsion of all foreign workers), or the European-wide recession. Everything is localized and individualized: an anonymous city impinges on a few isolated individuals.

The film and the reviews we are commenting on here raise an important issue for the development of left film criticism--the need for a dialectical approach. It's important to see what is progressive about a film as well as what is not. How does a particular film contribute to our understanding of the world we live in and to our understanding and fashioning of political films? And how does it distort, confuse, and mystify? How does the film break down rigid, stereotypical thinking, and how does it support tenets of bourgeois ideology, such as sexism and racism?

Stam and Gitlin have seen only one side and failed to grasp sufficiently that for a film to promote sexism and racism is not merely "inadvertent," as Stam says of the film's sexism, or a reasonable artistic option, but actually amounts to a blow struck against all of us by bourgeois culture. If Tanner is serious about his politics, he should deal in future films with the kinds of political criticisms we're making here; if he doesn't, his position within mainstream bourgeois filmmaking will be clearer. ■

BAD NEWS BEARS
SOUR AMERICAN DREAM

--Dana B. Polan

Michael Ritchie's films are variations on a single and important theme: how the competitiveness and hustle of contemporary American life corrupts principles. In SMILE, Ritchie's film about beauty pageants in America, one of the young contestants, Miss Antelope Valley, begins to question the relevance of expensive beauty contests. Her roommate defends the pageant: "boys get money for making touchdowns; why shouldn't girls get money for being cute?" Miss Antelope Valley reflects, "But maybe boys shouldn't get money for playing football." THE BAD NEWS BEARS, Ritchie's newest film, amplifies this point about the degradation sports suffer when they become an industry. The film indicts the American dream, and the detours that dreams and principles take in a world of profit-oriented culture where the only form human relationships can adopt is one shaped by the marketplace.

Hollywood films don't usually take the guiding forces behind American life as their target. Therefore, when a director like Ritchie consistently challenges dominating influences in American life, his or her work demands attention. THE BAD NEWS BEARS is Ritchie's most carefully worked out critique of American society. Working within Hollywood and the framework of Hollywood narrative, Ritchie has given THE BAD NEWS BEARS broad-based audience appeal, but, at the same time, he has not compromised his intentions: to initiate a critique of the evils of the world in which most of his audience lives. This mixture of entertainment and biting condemnation makes THE BAD NEWS BEARS an interesting film to discuss.

To many people who have not seen it, though, the film may appear to be no more than a trifle, one more bit of nonsense from the Hollywood factory. Moreover, this impression seems confirmed by the cutesy Mort Drucker drawings used in the film's advertising campaign, and by the presence of lovable Tatum O'Neal and Walter Matthau in the cast. To many, THE BAD NEWS BEARS would seem to be a children's film in the most unappealing sense: syrupy and sugary and soft at its center.

But THE BAD NEWS BEARS is far from soft at its center. The film deals not just with children but with what happens to children in a world based on gain and push. Progressively, Ritchie's films have come more and more to deal with innocents altered by the profit-makers around them and by the structures of living these profit-makers have erected as the American dream. THE BAD NEWS BEARS is the logical culmination of this concern with the fate of innocence; it focuses on children as the most susceptible victims of American life. Most of the North Valley Bears are not yet in their teens, and they are already jaded--members of a lost generation forced to be old before their time, and not really meeting that demand.

THE BAD NEWS BEARS shows us children who are already seeing psychiatrists, who are coarse and obscene, and who have begun to surrender their

identities to the values of the persuaders around them. The adults in the film cling to their stifling values of competition, and they have either ignored or become ignorant of the problems of the youths they have done so much to shape. In a revealing scene, the team's pitcher, Amanda (O'Neal), informs manager Buttermaker (Matthau) that a twelve-year old friend of hers is already on the pill, and the man she idolizes can only answer, "Don't ever say that word to me again." The film is careful to claim that children aren't inherently lost; they have been misguided. They need both teachers and parents, and Buttermaker, who could be both, is neither.

Yet THE BAD NEWS BEARS, as one more moment in Ritchie's continuing investigation, is not about anything as socially limited as the generation gap. Rather, its concern is with the contradiction between the values imposed on life by the American system, and the values of honesty and open human interrelation. It is important to Ritchie's conception that baseball serve primarily as a metaphor in the film. Although the corruption of the children in THE BAD NEWS BEARS began before the movie's opening, the film clearly shows that there are moments when temporary escape might be possible. In the film's most dramatically satisfying moment, Lupez, the team's chronic incompetent, finally catches a pop fly and the team goes wild with joy. The moment celebrates the possibilities of personal accomplishment, of achievement outside the confines of the usual social patterns.

In fact, Ritchie's films applaud most those moments when people can simply enjoy something, and not have the corrupted values of others distort that enjoyment: the pure thrill of skiing in DOWNHILL RACER, of flute playing in SMILE, of ball playing in THE BAD NEWS BEARS. And certainly it is this aspect of his films which audiences most enjoy. The thrill and excitement felt by the films' participants are shared by the audience.

Yet Ritchie has little optimism about the possibilities of relief from the contradictions of American life. Escape can only be momentary, rebellion can only be isolated and extremely limited in scope. Furthermore, the forces of corruption always stand ready to co-opt all dissidence. Ritchie's most positive heroes are either partial sell-outs or ineffectual rebels at best. The films don't really propose answers; they are more concerned with demonstrating the enormity of the problem.

Through precise attention to detail, Ritchie shows the interconnectedness of various aspects of American life, and by this, he emphasizes the many holds mass culture has over its inhabitants. To underscore the omnipresence of mass culture, Ritchie sets many of his scenes in Jack-in-the-Boxes, Pizza Huts, and McDonalds. Such details work to clarify the extent of contemporary forms of domination over everyday life.

THE BAD NEWS BEARS is less about baseball than about the America in which baseball is played. Therefore, the film ends in pessimism; whatever positive advances the characters have undergone are inconsequential within the enormity of the world which engulfs them. If characters like Buttermaker finally begin to fight against deceit, they do so only within the limits of the game of baseball; they never go beyond those limits to challenge the world which corrupts activities like baseball. These characters are barely able to hold onto their dignity, and Ritchie suggests that this is not enough. The Bears finally play a clean (or semi-clean) game of ball, but when they lose, they quickly fall back into vicious and close-minded jealousy; Tanner, the team's overambitious battler, for example, tells the victors to take their trophy and "shove it up their ass." Earlier in the film, when the Little League Commission tries to close down the North Valley Bears, Buttermaker asks his team if they want to quit. "Hell, no," Tanner declares, "I wanna play ball." The important lesson in THE BAD NEWS BEARS is that we will never be able to just play ball: baseball, all sports, exist in a certain social context. We can't understand or appreciate the one and not the other. ■

THE FRONT
COMIC REVENGE

--Norman Markowitz

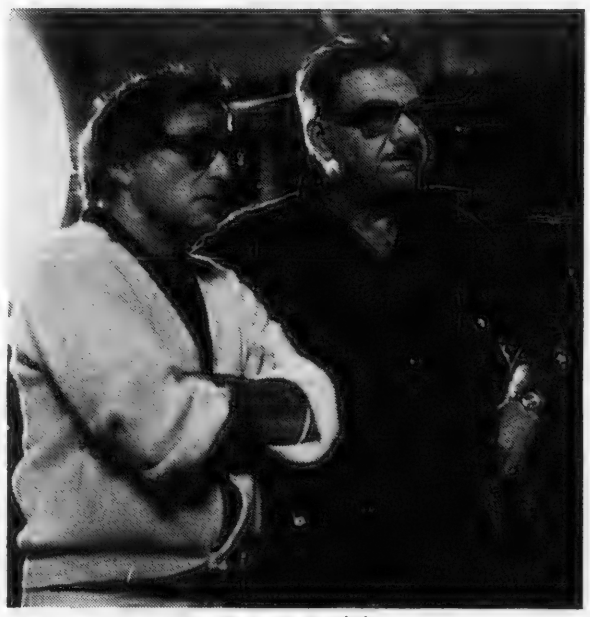
In April, 1950, Albert Maltz addressed a defense rally for the Hollywood Ten with the following words:

> I abominate the manner in which our land is now being befouled by the men in charge of the machinery of government. You will notice that I do not limit my charge. When this case began, in the Fall of 1947, I did that, as did others. I pointed to the evil actions of certain committees, to certain individuals like, J. Parnell Thomas, Rankin, Attorney General Clark. But many things have happened in our land in two and a half years--bad things. And today, it would be blindness to view such events as the work of a few individuals alone or a few reactionary committees in Congress. On the contrary, the time has come when it must be admitted that what is at work here is the total machinery of our men in government, on a policy level and on an executive level. When I say this, I am referring to the loyalty oaths and the loyalty executive boards; to the low courts and the high courts; to the magistrate Judges and Supreme Court Justices; to public prosecutors and their sinister squads of perjured informers, who now roam the land testifying for expenses, and who know in advance that the government machinery will protect them in any lie they choose to utter . . . . All by arrangement and connivance and manipulation of what is solemnly called a Department of Justice . . . . Furthermore, I was not born in a land in which informers and professional perjurors wrote the Constitution, dictated the substance of debates in Congress, or decided who might lead a trade union, teach in a school, or write a book.[1]

Maltz's analysis was perfect, but a "correct" left analysis of the repression mattered little in the America of 1950. Maltz and his Hollywood Ten colleagues soon went to prison for refusing to kowtow to HUAC, for refusing to make the gestures of obedience to a society whose leadership had declared Communists to be the agents of a hostile foreign power conspiring for world conquest. And, of course, they were not the only ones.

The primary leaders of the Communist Party were, with Strangelove logic, imprisoned under the Smith Act for having re-established the party out of the Communist Political Association in 1945, an act deemed synonymous with "conspiracy to teach or advocate" overthrow of the government by force and violence (evidence for these contentions consisted of quotations from Marx, Lenin, and Stalin and lectures from the prosecutors about the evils of International Communism). Scores of other individuals were arrested for refusing to turn over to congressional and other investigatory bodies books, private records, and lists of names. Thousands were dismissed from government and public service, tens of thousands kept from employment of various sorts by the dissemination of lists kept by local Red Squads, local right-wing vigilantes, franchise business blacklisters, various state HUACs, national HUAC, the Senate Internal Security Committee, and the industrious minions of the FBI. Millions who had signed their names to some left petition in the 1930's and the 1940's or had participated in any way in the mass struggles were to some degree harassed and intimidated.

Also, the repressions didn't quite end with the fall of McCarthy, or the election of Kennedy, or the development of mass opposition to the



Scriptwriter Walter Bernstein (L)
Producer-director Martin Ritt

Vietnam war. Rather, it continued from its national height in the early 1950's to police raids, provoked murders, and Kafkaesque trials and hearings for radicals and militants through the 1960's and the 1970's. Even with the very important changes in mass opinion in the last decade, it remains one of the most significant features of contemporary American life that the public and police machinery established to stigmatize, harass, bankrupt, and if necessary incarcerate left-wing militants and destroy their mass organizations has continued to grow and develop.

All of this old and continuing saga would hardly seem to be the stuff for a traditional Woody Allen movie. For some who lived through the repression and for many young American Leftists today, the intrusion in THE FRONT of the classic Woody Allen character, the Jewish Schlemiel, always rushing into banana peels in the pursuit of unlikely situations and unwilling women, may seem offensive or at the very least unserious. Other critics might find a Columbia Pictures film that focuses exclusively on the television blacklist a bit hypocritical and self-serving. After all, it was the Hollywood capitalists and their trade association representative, Eric Johnston, who ordered Dalton Trumbo and the other Hollywood Ten writers to testify before HUAC or face dismissal, and who subsequently turned their studios over to the making of cold war propaganda films. They offered no aid to the blacklist victims who were imprisoned, and permitted the victims to return to work very slowly under various guises and at greatly reduced commissions. Given the fact that the same class responsible for the repression retains power in Hollywood, as in the society at large, it is doubtful that the big studios could ever sponsor a politically serious film about the "McCarthyism" of the postwar era.

Perhaps one should stop to ask what a politically serious film about the repression would constitute. Such a film would probably owe more to the introspection of Bertolucci's THE CONFORMIST than to the slapstick of Allen's PLAY IT AGAIN, SAM. Humor, pathos, and absurdity, would have their place in such a film, but would develop from the real conditions of authorities and ruling groups attempting to distort and destroy human beings instead of from formula gags and artificial situations.

Serious films about the repression would also need a clear historical focus, presenting men like Eisenhower, Truman, Nixon, and J. Edgar Hoover as personalities to be comprehended within the context of the developing class struggle and the major international rivalries of the period, instead of names to be dropped. However, these are the films of America's socialist future, films that will deal realistically with both the general historical context and the practical manifestations of the repression, the workers beaten on assembly lines, the teachers purged from schools, the militants and intellectuals blacklisted in a spiral of repression that served to build unity behind General Motors, the FBI, and the Strategic Air Command.

THE FRONT is manifestly a film of the cynical, searching present, from its opening collage of early fifties newsreel shots--Joe McCarthy's wedding, Douglas MacArthur and Marilyn Monroe receiving the adulation of the masses in open cars, bombers in Korea and bomb shelters in the United States--to its schlemiel protagonist, Howard Prince (Woody Allen), a down-wardly mobile cashier-bookie, who gets a taste of the good life in the 1950's by becoming a literary front (or fence) for a group of blacklisted television writers.

Prince is a cliché embodiment of bourgeois conventional wisdom, fifties style. When he learns that his old friend, Howard Miller, has been blacklisted (it takes him a while to realize what blacklisting means), he replies to Miller, "How many times have I told you? Take care of number one." Later, Prince suggests to Miller, in the best tradition of private enterprise, that other screenwriters be added to their arrangement so that profits can be expanded for all. Finally, with tailored clothes, a luxury apartment, and spots on TV talk shows under his belt, Prince burlesques the role of the triumphant bourgeois: he starts to read the scripts and makes critical comments on the grounds that "you have to be good. Blacklisted is not enough."

Unfortunately, Prince's pursuit of Florence Barrett (Andrea Marcovicci) the lovely, refined TV production assistant who admires him for the scripts he never wrote and expects him to be an intellectual knight in shining armor against the blacklist mars the film's generally successful attempts at political burlesque and weakens its moments of pathos and insight, along with its final dramatic resolution. Thus, Prince the budding entrepreneur takes second place to Prince

the Schlemiel in search of true love. When Prince, for example, convinces Florence to abandon her Paul Robeson concert tickets, he abandons his basketball tickets, and they both go out to dinner. At this point the film crosses the line into situation comedy. At the end, it remains embarrassingly unclear whether Prince has decided to fight HUAC because of his friend Hecky Brown's (Zero Mostel) suicide or simply to win back Florence.

Even with these serious flaws and an inability to confront directly the larger political issues, the film does make valuable political points as it shows television's subservience to the advertisers, who in turn are subservient to a climate of opinion which permits blacklisters, businessmen, and right-wing zealots to determine who will work. Thus, the famous flap in the late fifties over a television drama on the Nurenburg trials is recounted in the story of a script held up because a gas company protested references to concentration camps. The vulnerability of artists who sell their skills to show business entrepreneurs is well treated in the scenes where Hecky Brown stands helpless before a Catskills resort owner who gives him work at a fraction of his former fee, proceeds to cut that fraction in half, and speaks eloquently for his class by shouting "You Commie Son of a Bitch" when the blacklisted comic literally hits back.

Although the film usually smuggles in and dilutes its political message (after the fashion, ironically, of the blacklisted screenwriters who in the 1930's and the 1940's had to settle for a few minutes of social consciousness interwoven into the Hollywood product), it does capture the tone of fear and indifference that permeated most mass media in the era along with a portrayal of the genuinely sleazy types (the red-baiting supermarket owner hobnobbing with TV organization men, the ex-FBI man with pictures of J. Edgar Hoover and Chiang Kai-shek on his wall and a blacklisting "Freedom Information Service" as his business) who had their counterparts in real life and were a significant, albeit low-level, component of the repression.

Unfortunately, THE FRONT often appears uncertain about whether it is portraying characters or caricatures and hesitant about whether to use its characters to make political criticism or to serve simply as objects of sympathy. In his first meeting with the screenwriters, for example, Howard Prince hears one of them, Delaney, state with apparent determination that he is a Communist, not an innocent, and that the blacklist is being used to whip up support for the cold war. While this is fine, the audience never learns from the movie what the American Communist party and the broader left movement of which it was the leading force had been about (one wonders if the movie could have survived with Columbia Pictures if writer Walter Bernstein had dared to be more explicit about the backgrounds and beliefs of his screenwriters and their views about the significance of the repression).

What the film settles for is a scene where Delaney, the Communist, in tones reminiscent of the haunted left of the early 1950's, tells Prince (after he has received a summons from HUAC) to stand on the Fifth Amendment, while his friend Alfred Miller begs him to take a stand rather than to believe that he can beat the committee at their own game. All of this is fine, and even decent, but quite hopeless, given Prince's position in the film (if he takes the fifth, the network abandons him and he joins the blacklist with the label "Fifth amendment Communist," if he takes any action to fight back individually he probably goes to jail). Indeed, Miller's call for commitment and resistance on Prince's part is illogical and empty, since the film presents no politics on which commitment could be based and posits no way for individuals to fight collectively.

As it is, Prince's reply to the committee, "Fellas (and who but the Allen schlemiel character would address HUAC as fellas) I don't recognize the right of this committee to ask me these kinds of questions. And furthermore, you can go fuck yourselves," while it appeals to good democratic and civil libertarian sentiment, is hardly satisfying, since it produces only a prison sentence and a goodbye kiss from Florence, whose love has thus been won with the help of HUAC police agents. Perhaps Bernstein might have introduced a more serious note at the conclusion by dealing with the legal appeals, fund-raising struggles, and attacks by the press that provided the background for those imprisoned for contempt of the various public authorities. As it is, the film presents the audience with a kind of reverse Hollywood happy ending, where the hero gets both jail and the woman, and one is left to decide whether the latter was worth the former.

The film's saving grace and major artistic achievement, as I see it, is the performance of Zero Mostel, a splendidly executed self-parody, as the gross comic Hecky Brown (*née* Herschel Brownstein). Brought to the office of Hennessy, the ex-FBI man and professional blacklister, Hecky is willing to humiliate himself (Hennessy: "Would you say you were duped. Hecky: Tell me what it means and I'll say it"), but he refuses to name any names. Although the personalities are quite different, Hecky's eventual descent into hysteria and suicide is similar to that of Philip Loeb, the character actor driven to debt, despondency, and eventual death in the early 1950's as he desperately sought someone to charge him with something so that he could clear his name.

In his ranting and in his suicide, Hecky brings the repression home to the audience more effectively than all of Woody Allen's bantering. "It's Brownstein's fault," he raves to Prince, "I can't make a deal with them because of Brownstein. Brownstein, lay off or I'll kill you." Hecky's death, a suicide scene worthy of and perhaps imitative of Chaplin, permits Howard Prince to break for a few moments out of his self-imposed schlemiel pose, first as a distant observer at the funeral and then as an unfriendly witness who refuses to give to HUAC the name of "Herschel Brownstein, also known as Hecky Brown."

With all of its faults, THE FRONT is a significant film with decent intentions, important limitations, and real, albeit modest, achievements. For the millions who are steadily fed a diet of anti-Communist and anti-left propaganda where only the seasoning changes, it will hopefully help to take the horns off of Communist targets, and, with all of its political evasions, at least challenge conventional views about who the real victims and the real victimizers were in the political wars of the 1940's and the 1950's. For these reasons, it has already been attacked by some pundits, both rightists and aging partisans of what used to be called "the vital center." For these reasons, also, it deserves critical support, with the accent on comradely criticism, from the American left.

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1. Pamphlet. "Two Addresses, Gale Sondergaard and Albert Maltz." Hollywood, CA. April 21, 1950, pp. 10-11. Xerox copy available for $1.25 from The Alexander Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Library, P.O. Box 673, Berkeley, CA, 94701. ■

HARLAN COUNTY, USA
THE DOCUMENTARY FORM

--E. Ann Kaplan

Recent film theory, spinning off from semiology and structuralism, has shown that film of all types, including documentary, ultimately is "fiction": images structured in time and space in a series of patterns arranged according to the filmmaker's view of the world or to the dominant codes through which a culture apprehends reality. Eileen McGarry argues that long before the filmmaker arrives, "reality itself is already coded, first in the infrastructure of the social formation (human economic practice) and secondly by the superstructure of politics and ideology."[1] McGarry calls that "which exists and happens in front of the camera" the pro-filmic event and claims that even in the case of nonfiction films, this event is coded. "Even if the filmmakers attempt not to control or encode the pro-filmic event," says McGarry, "certain decisions about reality are made: the choice of subject and the location of shooting (not to mention the preconceptions, no matter how minimal, of the film workers), the presence of the film workers and their equipment (no matter how unobtrusive), all participate in, control and encode the pro-filmic event within the context of the technology of cinema and the dominant ideology."[2]

Several political films by women--JANIE's JANIE, THE WOMAN'S FILM, I AM SOMEBODY and, recently, UNION MAIDS--need to be reexamined in light of McGarry's ideas, but another one, HARLAN COUNTY, U.S.A., raises the issues directly. The film seems to move in two opposite directions at once: on the one hand, it is highly stylized and belongs in what we may loosely call a special "genre" of political films dealing with strikes and stemming most recently from SALT OF THE EARTH (although the tradition goes back to Vertov in Russia); on the other hand, the film is unusual in that, at certain moments, it breaks through codes of fiction to create a relationship with actuality that sets it apart from other political films of its kind. On this second level, it is almost impossible to view the film as "a work of art"--something waiting out there for aesthetic or other kinds of "assessment." The energies, emotions, and political stance of both filmmakers and strikers are so unified and dominant that the film becomes a committed record of their experiences, an illustration of what they went through during a specific time period, rather than a completed "product" of any kind. HARLAN COUNTY, U.S.A. records a small slice of time in a long event; we are aware that there are happenings both before and after its making--that what we are seeing is part of a continuum, and suggests more than it can show.

The problem with HARLAN COUNTY, I think, lies in the fact that it moves in those two extreme directions, although that movement is also what makes the film interesting. In some ways, it is very much like any other political documentary: the filmmakers interview people, intercut speeches by the management or union leaders, fill in intervening events, and interpret and comment on what is happening, (largely through words on the screen). On this level, what McGarry says about coding and the shaping of "reality" by the filmmakers is true. HARLAN COUNTY, U.S.A. is no simple recording of

State cops make way for scabs

"unmanipulated reality" or a reflection of life as it presents itself[3] but a highly structured argument about the strike and the union from the miners' point of view.

When the structuring becomes extreme enough, the film differs little from a fictional reenactment of a political event, like SALT OF THE EARTH, which implicitly relies on realist conventions familiar from Hollywood movies while reordering the signs within those conventions.[4] The bosses are presented in hostile and sinister modes, like the "bad guys" in westerns and gangster films, while the mass of Mexican-American miners are presented as the "good guys," without being patronized as in a film like Ford's GRAPES OF WRATH. The miners are the protagonists of SALT OF THE EARTH and are seen from their own point of view. HARLAN COUNTY, U.S.A. sets up the conflict between the bosses and the miners in a very similar way. The first section of the film traces the immediate history of the strike and shows how the Kentucky miners were first involved in democratizing the corrupt United Mine Workers Union, then headed by Tony Boyle. Once the union finally elected Arnold Miller, the miners asked their company, owned by the giant Duke Power, to sign a UMW contract, instead of one with the company union. When the company refused, the miners struck. This strike is the main event in the present as the movie goes along. The immediate history is inserted in flashbacks (sometimes disorienting since we are not sure what time span we are in), whereas the earlier history of the miners' struggles is expressed through interviews with an old, retired couple (to whom the film periodically cuts) and through the powerful, militant music of a Kentucky miners' group that is on the soundtrack for much of the film. The narrative of the strike itself follows a pattern much like that in SALT OF THE EARTH. The event in both films, after all, lends itself naturally to dramatization: there are picket lines, union meetings, confrontations with the intractable bosses and their henchmen, confrontations with the scabs being shipped in, scenes showing the miners' flagging interest in the cause, and discussions of the appalling working conditions and dangers (here, black lung disease) that beset the men. Very similar in both films is the way that, once the injunction is served against the workers, the women decide to take over the picket lines. In HARLAN COUNTY, U.S.A. from this point on, as in SALT OF THE EARTH, women move to the center of the action. We see them at meetings supporting each other, or divided about how to proceed; we see strong, brave women whose dedication never flags and whose pain and suffering makes us weep and wonder how they can go on.

It is in these very scenes of the women's naked pain and suffering that the film breaks through the fictional codes in a remarkable way. In comparison, the conventions used to express pain in SALT OF THE EARTH (as, for example, in the scene where Ramon's beating by the bosses' henchmen is intercut with his wife's painful childbirth) seem contrived. We know that the women Kopple is filming are not acting. She managed to catch them exposing their pain: evidently they trusted her enough to be relaxed in front of her camera. At other times, however, when the emotion is not intense and we are simply being shown what is going on, the shots seem so familiar because of earlier strike films that they tend to draw our attention away from the uniqueness of this particular strike. One gets a sense of having been through all this before, of knowing how it will end, much as one "knows" in the regular commercial Hollywood genres.[5] On this level we begin to get carried away by the narrative structure and to expect the film to end at certain dramatic moments--during the funeral for a young man shot on the picket line one morning or when the miners finally win their right to have a union. We recall the victory at the end of SALT OF THE EARTH and half expect an equally satisfying "ending" in HARLAN COUNTY, U.S.A.

Of course, the film does not end with either of these events, and here again we must recognize Kopple's achievement in breaking through the codes. If the narrative structuring is unavoidable to some degree, and if it detracts momentarily from the filmmaker's main goal in the film (to elicit emotional and political support for the miners and to expose their ruthless treatment by the company), the effect we feel from the film as a whole is one of being overwhelmed by the bravery and strength of the people in the face of their appalling situation in the mining community.

Kopple's use of the camera in the scenes of the women's meetings or in those of the picket lines when the miners were under attack and in danger is remarkable for conveying a sense of the here and now. Instead of creating a barrier between subject and audience, of somehow "tampering with life itself," as McGarry argues, at these moments the camera plunges us into the midst of the actuality of the event. This is particularly true in one early morning scene, when the miners on the picket line are expecting violence and have gone there with guns. Kopple and her crew are there--the dangers to them notwithstanding. A truculent bosses' man drives up and asks Kopple for her press card. Kopple keeps her camera fixed on the man and begins to turn his question back to him, asking him for his papers: how does she know he's got the authority to question her? It's a beautiful moment, one that suddenly makes us recognize Kopple's own presence: we understand the reality of the camera's and Kopple's being there that morning on that line together with the miners, willing and ready, along with them, to take what happens. A second and similar example of such a moment is the time when the women picketers confront the sheriff when he comes to arrest them. They begin to argue with him, trying to shame him because he's playing the bosses' game. We see him wavering, caught off guard, not knowing how to proceed since the women's arguments have some truth: they are asking him to be a real human being and decide for himself what is the responsible thing to do. But he turns out to be a man who can only follow orders and function within a well-defined role. Kopple again catches something spontaneous that reveals exactly where people in authority were.

The total solidarity of the film workers with the miners' cause makes HARLAN COUNTY, U.S.A. an unusual documentary--one that renders most of the statements about the reordering of "reality" inapplicable at some points, though they are true for much of the film. The film workers in no way stand apart from events, observing or recording them. There is no pretense of a "neutral" stance (as in most cinema-verité), which is the kind McGarry is talking about in her comments about documentary. Kopple's is an obviously involved camera, at least at these moments, a camera that reflects her own commitment to the people, their suffering, and their struggle. Because she experiences the struggle as if it were her own, she enables us to experience it in an unusually direct and moving way.

Because Kopple was there, filming as things were happening, in an involved stance, the film, of course, could have no "ending" as in the more highly structured and conventional political documentaries. The funeral scene is painful because we are seeing real grief and loss, but the people have to go on, and so must the film. The vote to decide whether or not to accept unionization with the limits set by the bosses has no unambiguous and triumphant ending; for the vote was by no means unanimous, and the people had many misgivings about compromising the way they did. Kopple did in fact stop filming soon after the vote, not because the issues were resolved but because she had to shut off her camera at some point. The film could have no proper "ending" because of its close links to the real events, which, of course, have no end as such. The miners are involved in a long struggle that has its roots in the past and presumably will continue long into the future, and it is part of Kopple's achievement that she conveys this fact to us clearly.

The remarkable press conference that followed the screening of HARLAN COUNTY, U.S.A. at Lincoln Center in October '76 in itself reflected the status of the film as something other than an ordinary "art work." The projectors went off, the lights came up, and onto the stage stepped the musical group we had heard during the film to continue playing in the flesh. Shortly afterwards, Kopple and her photographer came on stage, along with several of the strikers whom we had also just been watching in the film. The discussion that followed focused not at all on the film as a film but rather on the content, the issues it had raised. People wanted to know what had happened since Kopple stopped filming, and we learned that the most active strikers had been blacklisted, that scabs continued to be brought in, and that the Ku Klux Klan had begun a campaign to divide white and black workers. We also learned that one of the women's husbands, who had been sick with black lung disease, had since died and the audience was urged to write to Senator Javits to revive legislation in connection with the disease and to help in any other way they could. One left Lincoln Center not thinking much about what sort of film experience one had had but, rather, mulling over the bravery and strength of these men and women, whose daily reality is a continuous struggle for ordinary rights, in a situation where the odds are stacked against them by a company that all but owns them.

The nature of the film experience was, of course, all-important in the end. For it was the presence of Kopple and her camera down there in Harlan County, Kentucky, that brought us close to the people and their cause in the unique moments in the film when the camera participates in events rather than trying to record them. The commitment and involvement of Kopple and her crew in what they were filming made such moments possible. And it was the immediate sense of the lived actuality of these moments that made all the more clear the use of conventions common to the political film in other sections. These sections, in contrast to the former, seem rather flat, too familiar, and automatic. The moments of lived actuality make HARLAN COUNTY an unusual documentary, raising new problems of the relationship between actuality and film, life and art. Perhaps this kind of documentary belongs in some category of its own, representing a series of screen images that complement lived experience rather than images that stand completely on their own, forming aesthetic patterns related to, yet quite distinct from, life. For the aim of the film is not to provide an aesthetic experience but rather to inform people about a specific political event and, if possible, inspire them, through the sympathy it elicits, to help further the miners cause.

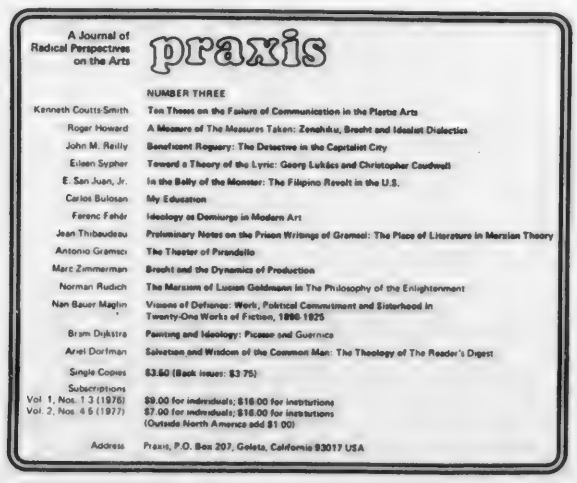
1 Eileen McGarry, "Documentary, Realism and Women's Cinema," Women and Film, Vol.2, No. 7 (Summer, 1975), p.50.

2 Ibid., p.51.

3 Ibid, p.53, McGarry quoting Stephen Mamber, Cinema Verité in America: Studies in Uncontrolled Documentary. Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press, 1974, p.201.

4 I've argued this point in "Aspects of British Feminist Film Theory: A Critical Evaluation of Texts by Johnston and Cook," Jump Cut, Nos. 12/13, December, 1976), p.52.

5 This is obviously a sophisticated kind of response and one that a person seeing the film without knowing about other political films would not necessarily have. ■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ROME, OPEN CITY
THE RISE TO POWER OF LOUIS XIV
RE-EVALUATING ROSSELLINI

--Martin Walsh

> "Ever since ROME, OPEN CITY, I have maintained a conscious, determined endeavor to try to understand the world in which I live, in a spirit of humility and respect for the facts and for history. What was the meaning of ROME, OPEN CITY? We were emerging from the tragedy of the war. We had all taken part in it, for we were all its victims. I sought only to picture the essence of things. I had absolutely no interest in telling a romanticized tale along the usual lines of film drama. The actual facts were much more dramatic than any screen cliche."
>
> --Roberto Rossellini, 1960

Rossellini's place in film histories is secure, yet a persistent fog obscures the relationship of his work to the radical avant-gardes.[1] ROME, OPEN CITY is cited as an exemplary work by Godard[2] ("...all roads lead to ROME, OPEN CITY."), and its influence is seen as seminal upon the formation of the French 'new wave' directors; it has been seen as a spur to the growth of cinema-verite. And Neo-realism, as a genre, has fairly consistently enjoyed a reputation for marking a decisive change in the evolution of narrative cinema.

Yet since Andre Bazin's writings on neorealism and Rossellini which founded the normative evaluation of Rossellini as the great film 'realist,' there has been comparatively little by way of critical re-evaluation. Recent articles in *Film Comment*, *Film Quarterly*, *Cinema*, and *Artforum*, prompted by the (certainly justified) interest in Rossellini's historical projects, have concentrated upon the 'histories' as a remarkable new phase in Rossellini's oeuvre, commenting upon the continuities from earlier work and the increasingly 'educational' orientation. Useful though these pieces are, not one engages the central issue of how far Rossellini succeeds in his stated aim: "The great mission of art ought to be to free men from their conditioning."

A couple of years ago *Screen* devoted an issue to Rossellini, which consisted mainly of translations (a long article by Marie Canella written in 1966 and some interviews) and a piece by Christopher Williams on Bazin's claims for neo-realism.[3] Disappointingly there were no textual analyses, and the question of the nature and degree of Rossellini's ideological/aesthetic intervention into the conventions of narrative cinema went largely unexplored: Rossellini's own claims for his work ("My position is one of complete objectivity"!) were allowed to stand uninterrogated. Indeed the only article I know of which explicitly states the case against neo-realism is one by Simon Hartog on BICYCLE THIEVES which appeared in *Cinemantics* no. 1, five years ago. In it Hartog wrote:

> "BICYCLE THIEVES is born of a theory which is not a theory but a style--a style which changes the wallpaper without challenging the principles inherent in the structure.... With its traditional musical comment and its sympathy demanding devices, its individual hero and his counterpointing son, the construction and conception of BICYCLE THEIVES are not threatened by the stylistic adjustments of using 'real' people and 'authentic' sets."

Precisely the same may be said of ROME, OPEN CITY: which is not to deny the *force* of the film, its emotional conviction and vitality. It is, however, to suggest that its achievement is one which must be placed firmly within the illusionist tradition. The film has traditionally been praised for its realism. How is this realism constructed? There are two aspects that demand consideration. The first, on which most critics have concentrated, is that concerned with sets or their lack, actors or the use of non-actors, hand-held cameras, grainy film-stock that lends a 'newsreel' authenticity, finance from outside the dominant industry, and a collectively produced script.[4] All these factors are important, and indeed they help shape a narrative whose form is somewhat differentiated from both the Italian 'white telephone' and American narrative styles. On the other hand, it is necessary to examine the cinematic structure through which the narrative of ROME, OPEN CITY is presented. To what extent is *it* different from the dominant American model? Here the answer must be, very little. The skills of ROME, OPEN CITY are the skills of a director who has a total and unquestioning mastery of a system of representation built up by bourgeois film culture from D.W. Griffith on. It is a system of representation whose fundamental intent is to make the audience suspend its disbelief, and enter the world of the film *as if* it were the real world; the audience is encouraged to read the time and space of the film's actions as homogeneous, unified, 'real': the emphasis on 'reality' at the structural level leads to a masking of the process of production of meaning. The signifying activity is effaced in an attempt to make us acquiesce in a response of 'this is how the world really is,' of 'how wonderful to capture the truth in such difficult conditions.' This is the prime characteristic of bourgeois illusionist cinema,[5] and it results in a tension in Rossellini's work that is quite intriguing.

Rossellini claims, "I had absolutely no interest in telling a romanticized tale along the usual lines of film drama." At a certain level we can find support for this contention: the fact that there is no submission to 'stars,' that most of the principle protagonists of the film die in the course of its action, that the individual is constantly subordinated to a *social* process. For instance, take the famed death of Pina (Anna Magnani). She is to marry Francesco that day, but he is rounded up along with dozens of other men for interrogation; as the truck drives away, Pina breaks loose from the Nazi cordon and runs after it only to be cruelly shot down in the road. A few shots establish her death--her son being dragged away from her body, Don Pietro, the priest, cradling her limp corpse --and Rossellini cuts directly to the truck being ambushed by the resistance and the prisoners released. The narrative marches firmly on, barely pausing to register the individual drama of Pina's death--no wallowing in dying words or painful deaths or blood and gore, but simply the 'inexorable march of history.' And yet is all this *radically* different from our experience of illusionist narratives? The pathos of Pina's death has been meticulously prepared for. Emphasis on the impending marriage has recurred repeatedly through the first hour of the film and our *identification* with Pina rigorously founded; the very brevity of the scene of her death paradoxically infuses it with enormous emotional power. The cutting of the scene is hardly 'objective' either. Immediately prior to the gunshots, the camera is placed in the back of the truck, pulling away from her even as she runs toward it. The tension of this dual movement is certainly effective but hardly 'objective'; it is an attempt to make us feel with Francesco, in the back of the truck--a staple trick of almost every American director.

In other words, Rossellini's basic techniques are precisely those of a Costa-Gavras. He constructs a world which we are to perceive as real, natural and unconstructed, while at the same time situating the audience on the 'right' side. During Nazi raids the camera is almost invariably situated in a window or on a roof-top as if sneaking an illicit Peek at what goes on below. Our point of view is always that of 'The Resistance' and the Germans are always clearly 'the enemy': this is fair enough for this was Rossellini's situation during the war and that of his co-workers. The problem is that it is clearly impossible to accept this today as in any sense a simple 'reproduction of reality': the film stands and has the power to move audiences not simply because the Italians are right and the Germans wrong--and the film magically 'captures' the 'truth' of the conflict--but because Rossellini's structuring ability is highly sophisticated: he can create an illusory sense of 'reality.' One point at which we see this structure or system at work is in the way in which time ellipses are masked--a basic device of the illusionist narrative mode. Manfredi arrives at the apartment, meets Pina, and asks her to send for Don Pietro: Pina sends her son, then leaves the room, to make coffee for Manfredi: cut to a noisy game of soccer, over which Don Pietro is presiding. The kid arrives to fetch him, they leave through the church, walk along the street, have a brief encounter with another priest (the continuation of an earlier scene in the film). Then cut to Pina entering room again with coffee and Don Pietro arrives. The point is this: the events we watch between Pina exiting to make coffee and re-entering with the coffee are meant to last exactly the time it takes her to make coffee: that is, Rossellini presents as 'real time' what is patently a filmic construct. The 'realism' of ROME, OPEN CITY is not a question of recording a pre-existent reality but a matter of the application of a highly sophisticated cinematic sensi-

bility. Indeed it's remarkable how much else Rossellini crams into this fetching-of-Don-Pietro-equals-making-of-coffee sequence. The efficiency with which Don Pietro's worldly nature is established--playing soccer or tolerating the theft of bread by his fellow priest, for example --reassures us that not a moment of this film is without *significance*. But it is not the significance of a pre-existing reality, as Bazin would have us believe, that is at issue. Nor is it a question, as Rossellini claims, of objectively presenting *facts*; for facts have no status within artistic discourse. Rather, it is a matter of Rossellini's hiding his signifying activity away in order to suggest that the film's significations have some absolute or eternal validation, as if filmic signification is 'simply the nature of things.'

Rossellini has said in an interview that the "great mission of art" is to "free men from their conditioning." A close analysis of ROME, OPEN CITY reveals that he succeeds in this only in a very partial sense. As Hartog puts it, the wallpaper is changed: all the surface trappings of commercial cinema are changed, insofar as a social statement predominates over an individualist one (e.g., the only lovers' talk of the film, between Francesco and Pina, is concerned with the future of their country, the struggle ahead, rather than with domestic details of a future honeymoon or naming their future children, etc.). The use of non-actors for many roles, location shooting (for part of the film only) and all the other well-known, defining characteristics of neorealism--these are surface manifestations that don't in any way change our deep-rooted conditioning to a certain kind of cinema: that of illusionism. The way in which Rossellini constructs the 'reality' of ROME, OPEN CITY (the effectiveness of its emotional atmosphere and its conviction) is through a utilization of the codes of representation that are precisely those of "the usual lines of film drama" that he denigrates. The basic structures of ROME, OPEN CITY in no way "free us from our conditioning" but are dependent upon exactly the same filmic codes of narrativity, of transparent representation, as the "screen cliches" Rossellini attempts to distinguish himself from.

Twenty years later, as he was engaged with his unique and massive enterprise, the historical films, it seemed reasonable to wonder whether perhaps some fundamental changes had occurred in Rossellini's cinematic consciousness. The renunciation of the commercial screen in favor of television and statements such as, "I'm not interested in the cinema as such," and "I think the artist has a very definite function in this world--it is to clarify things," marked his reorientation to an explicitly educational task:

> "We have reached the point we are at through a very special civilisation, unique, I think, in the history of man, the civilisation of specialists. Their mission has been accomplished, but only in one sense...the real question is to transcend the specialist and come back to man, because if man is made more complete, he will be able to participate in what he has created, and give it a real meaning."

In other words, Rossellini's basic desire in making THE IRON AGE (1964), THE RISE TO POWER OF LOUIS XIV (1966), THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES (1968), SOCRATES (1969), MAN'S STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL (1970), BLAISE PASCAL (1972), AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (1972), THE AGE OF THE MEDICI (1973), and DESCARTES (1974) (a total of more than 36 hours of film) is to make accessible large areas of the Western heritage, areas that have only been trivialized, if handled at all, by the mass-media. In Rossellini's view, his is an attempt at presentation rather than dramatization: "I try to intervene as little as possible. My work is scientific." As before with his claims to 'objectivity', we must read warily. One of the ways in which Rossellini has minimized his (overt) interventions is through the use of the Pancinor zoom lens. ROME, OPEN CITY was praised for its use of the hand-held camera, a choice he made "in order to free myself from big industrial

organisation." As the hand-held camera subsequently became the cinematic cliche of the sixties (e.g., Peter Watkins' PUNISHMENT PARK), Rossellini began to search for a zoom lens of sufficient versatility to free himself from the necessity of *cutting* and the 'tyranny' of fragmentation. In fulfillment of Bazin's ideal, Rossellini now has a camera that is able to develop scenes in long, unbroken passages without losing the ability to move quickly from medium shots to close up. The integrity of temporal and spatial relations so valued by Bazin's realism are preserved, and Rossellini's manipulative presence becomes less easily discernible than before.

Yet, of course, it remains. We may trace its presence in the conventionally linear movement of his narratives, the psychologizing details that make his characters approachable, and the understated but nevertheless 'realistic' acting (Mazarin on his deathbed in THE RISE TO POWER OF LOUIS XIV, for instance). The reason for Rossellini's attempt to efface his presence from the audience's consciousness is the same as that behind his dedramatization of his actors' performances: an anthropological rather than theatrical orientation. But his anthropology is of the dated kind that believes in the anthropologist's *neutrality*. The idea that material takes on a shape as a result of the interaction between subject and observer plays little part in Rossellini's conception of his activity. Yet the vitality of Rossellini's structuring sense is in many ways the root of his success in a film such as THE RISE TO POWER OF LOUIS XIV (A literal translation of the French title, The Taking of Power by Louis XIV, is rather more forceful; it emphasizes the aspect of Louis' will over that of cosmic predetermination). As with the other histories, a leading historian (Philippe Erlanger) collaborated on the script, guaranteeing the accuracy of detail demanded by Rossellini. Hence all kinds of information are presented to us in a documentation that fascinates by its very strangeness: the doctors' dependence upon their sense of smell in diagnosis; their belief in the curative powers of rhubarb and precious stones; Colbert's plans for a stud farm to secure the future strength of the army; the Queen's clapping to announce to the court that Louis performed his marital duties the preceding night.

However, as Walter Benjamin points out in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, "To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognise it 'the way it really was'...It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger." Some critics have responded to Rossellini's histories as if their primary achievement were the presentation of 'things as they were,' as if Rossellini simply piled up detail upon 'authentic' detail in an attempt to render the period 'tangible,' 'real.' Certainly the opening scenes of LOUIS XIV support such a reading as we (the audience) are taken from outside the court by the river into the court world of intrigue and power-struggle in a manner which suggests the voyeurist presentation of another time--we are literally transported into an alien world as observers. At first sight, it seems as if this were an example of what Walter Benjamin has called 'Universal History':

> "Universal history has no theoretical armature. Its method is additive; it musters a mass of data to fill the homogeneous, empty time. Materialist historiography, on the other hand, is based on a constructive principle. Thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well."[6]

However, it gradually becomes apparent that there is a decisive 'constructive principle' in operation, and it is one that establishes a central link between Louis' grasping of power and the primary techniques of bourgeois cinema: this principle is that of spectacle as a means to power. Indeed it is probably not too much to say that LOUIS XIV is one of the most extraordinary meditations on the nature and power of spectacle that the cinema has yet produced. (Incidentally, it is appropriate that Godard's most Rossellini-like film, LES CARABINIERS, is also one of his most crushing exposures of the notion of 'spectacle.')

LOUIS XIV is a description of a strategy, a manipulation: Louis' taking of power into his own hands. And the prime way in which he gets this power is by making himself into a spectacle, before which everybody is subordinated. Spectacle is power. And Rossellini makes clear that Louis' accession to domination is the result of Louis' contrivance, the result of his successful imposition of a fiction upon his people. And that fiction is presented in various ways: Louis is not seen in the opening minutes of the film, by the end we have no other visual reality (his coming to power eliminates all other worlds). The opening scenes have a confused, if not quite chaotic, aura as everybody jockeys for position while Mazzarin's death is awaited; by the end formality rules, everything is neatly ordered hierarchically. The opening scenes are sombre with deep reds, black, and the paleness of death, while by the end gaudy colors vibrate from every corner of the frame.

Once Mazzarin is dead, Louis' takeover is very rapid, and Rossellini's mise-en-scene is perfectly explicit. Over a static composition we hear the cry 'Le Roi,' and the frame immediately bustles with activity--Louis is, literally, the source of life. And Rossellini crystallizes Louis' centrality by putting the audience in the position of the courtiers who watch Louis as he wakes, dresses, hunts, and eats. This serves at least two functions: First, the presence of certain visitors to the court who need to have certain things explained to them enables us to receive pieces of information--that Louis has banished forks from the court, that the Queen is informing us, by clapping, that the king performed his marital duty last night, and so on. [Note: Rossellini doesn't 'invisibly' integrate these details into the narrative, as would, say, William Wyler, but emphasizes them in an overt 'aside.'] Secondly, the audience is explicitly placed as 'consumers' of Louis' image.

Indeed the very opening of the film establishes the audience as observers. Starting from the riverside, the camera follows two doctors on their way to Mazzarin. Once inside, we never leave but are condemned to orbit Louis' domain, just like the inhabitants of the court themselves. The extraordinary thing about it, though, is that our absorption is both allowed *and* interrogated. The further the film progresses, the more inexorably Rossellini moves us toward an understanding of both Louis' power over his world and the film's power over us. Louis is explicitly presented as a manipulator not unlike a film director. As Fouquet is arrested, the camera watches with Louis, imperious about the courtyard, impassively reviewing the result of his direction. Near the end of the film we observe Louis eating dinner--an extraordinarily elaborate ritual exemplifying the detailed hierarchy that Louis has enforced upon each of his minions which defines the minute range of each subordinate's authority. Only after some minutes do we realize that we are watching this banquet along with several hundred others. Louis is on a stage, while the world watches: this is his trap and we are under its spell as much as his courtiers. The final scene of the film, after Louis retires from the garden where he had walked with his totally submissive and serpentine retinue trailing behind, is Rossellini's last unmasking of the fiction, the spectacle, the performance. Louis enters his room to be alone and commences to disrobe himself--gloves, hat, sword, wig, pendant, sash, frilly waistcoat: he ceases to be the performer.

We are reminded of the trenchancy of Fouquet's observation earlier recalled by Louis, "One rules by appearances, and not by the nature of things." Louis' closing words, delivered in an intensely reflective manner, underline his and Rossellini's recognition of the dangerous power of spectacle:

> "There is a loftiness that does not depend on fortune. It is a certain air of superiority that seems to destine one for great things. It is a prize that we award ourselves imperceptibly. This quality enables us to usurp other men's deference and places us further above them than birth, rank, and merit itself....Neither the sun nor death can be faced steadily."

Despite the ephemerality of all things human implied in the last sentence, the crucial point to note here is the way spectacle--or by extension, fiction--can "usurp other men's deference." As well as being a film of remarkable anthropological authenticity, in which Rossellini essays an episodic and materialist presentation of objects, actions, fashions and time in a specific historical context, THE RISE OF LOUIS XIV is equally a meditation upon the relationship between fiction, spectacle and power.

So we can see that Rossellini does indeed fulfill Benjamin's dictum, "Thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well," insofar as from the welter of historical detail provided by Erlanger, he pulls out a crucial idea--an idea of paramount significance in our own world--and organizes his film around it. What results is not an impressionistic agglomeration of 'facts' but an analytic critique of the system of Louis' power.

The problem remains as to what extent this reflection on spectacle may be termed a radical discourse. Critics persist in drawing analogies between Rossellini and Brecht--and it is temptingly easy to do so--but the case is not proven in any depth. Where Brecht's writings of the thirties consistently reiterated the need for analysis of the ideological implications of the signifying activity, a reading of Rossellini's interviews makes one aware that he has little interest in ideological analysis at the syntactical level of film. We have seen this already in the way in which LOUIS XIV is dependent upon the narrative codes of bourgeois cinema. Even while purporting to offer an intelligent examination of 'spectacle,' the film itself remains spectacular to a disturbing degree. The film may, as I have suggested, critique spectacle, yet (as James Leahy pointed out to me) LOUIS XIV remains 'a process movie,' the thrill of 'how's he going to do it' shaping our fascination. Rossellini's *work* in the production of meaning is masked. Louis' manipulations hold stage-center throughout, and the result is that the viewer is 'fixed in position' in his seat--victim of Louis' image, with no possibility for escape. The very camera 'cannot' escape Louis' image, as we see in the hunt sequence, which is presented at one point through a series of left pans across a vista of trees, catching glimpses of the deer through the foliage; the sequence ends when the camera catches Louis instead of the deer in its frame and immediately slows down to hold on him, as if drawn by some magnetic force. A later instance comes during the banquet: a servant, standing on the left of the frame, is sent to the kitchen for the next course and has to pass behind Louis before exiting right frame. The camera therefore pans with the servant's movement until Louis is in the frame, at which point the camera zooms out to a twoshot, holding both Louis and the servant in frame until the servant leaves and someone else approaches Louis. The scene is shot as if the camera is bewitched by Louis' presence; it cannot leave him, just as we never leave the court environment once we have entered it at the beginning of the film.

"One rules by appearances, and not by the nature of things": it is ironic that Rossellini's mise-en-scene also rules by 'the appearance of things' through an aesthetic of 'reality' and 'objectivity,' as opposed to a materialist one, which would subject its own syntactical forms to critical scrutiny. As befits an artist within the Western tradition of liberal humanism, Rossellini is content to use the cinema as a 'window on the world,' as a medium which may represent and reproduce that world quite unproblematically. His attitude to the Pancinor zoom lens, for instance, is quite opposed to the anti-perspectival stance taken up by Godard from the mid-sixties. Where Godard worked, in materialist manner, toward an emphasis on the two-dimensionality of the screen image, Rossellini has labored toward the perfection of a zoom lens *that will not flatten* perspective. Clearly this endeavor is idealist--and Rossellini is not afraid in LOUIS XIV to flatten the screen out into Vermeer and Rembrandt canvases, particularly in the first section of the film: in so doing, he draws attention to the *painterly* consciousness of his frame, thereby reducing its degree of "naive" realism and suggesting the point of origin for our contemporary revisualization of a 17th Century milieu. Nevertheless, the 'anti-naturalist' asides (painterly quotes, the actors' restrained vocal delivery) are not sufficient to counter the fundamentally illusionist form of LOUIS XIV.

Rossellini's films may occasionally have Brechtian moments, but they are never sustained, and the decisive options for a Brechtian mise-en-scene (gestic acting, montage, separation of the levels of signification) are resolutely ignored. Stephen Heath argued (in *Screen*'s 'Brecht issue') that one of the fundamental characteristics of bourgeois art is the way it

fixes the reader/viewer's position vis-a-vis the text: this 'fixing' is closely related to the notion of the 'consumer' who is alienated from the production of the commodity--his/her position is 'fixed' so he/she cannot become a producer.[7] Louis cements his power by defining and fixing the position of each of his subjects in a very complex hierarchy: he says at one point, "It is necessary that everyone remain in their place." Rossellini's mise-en-scene analyzes Louis' strategy while masking his own; Louis' subjects are fixed in Louis' universe, and Rossellini's viewer is firmly chained in his/her situation as viewer and asked to accede uncritically to what Rossellini presents rather than actively engage in the production of meaning.

It is in this distinction that the difference between the endeavors of Rossellini and Straub/Huillet may be discerned. Rossellini's enterprise remains essentially 'humanist' in its unquestioning acceptance of the transparency of his medium of communication, whereas through their unceasing formalist investigation of their means of expression, Straub/Huillet's enterprise is radical in a more far-reaching sense of the term. Which is not, of course, to say that we should therefore cease viewing Rossellini: ROME, OPEN CITY and THE RISE TO POWER OF LOUIS XIV remain two very remarkable and important films whose status I have no desire to diminish: but a clearer placing of them with respect to the pole of bourgeois narrative, on the one hand, and the radical avant-garde, on the other, can do no harm and may eventually lead to a sharper and more useful understanding of their importance. Both films are important steps on the way to the radical cinema of the present and future.

THE RISE TO POWER OF LOUIS XIV

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[1]This article will discuss only two of Rossellini's films, ROME, OPEN CITY (1945), and THE RISE TO POWER OF LOUIS XIV (1966). This is because these are the only two films I have been able to see again recently, since access in Canada to the rest of his work is impossible. Regrettable as this is--I would particularly like to be able to see VIAGGIO IN ITALIA (1953) and VIVA L'ITALIA (1960)--the fact remains that these two films are the most frequently seen and discussed and most totemically influential of Rossellini's long career and are thus particularly open to reconsideration, even if they do not necessarily *sum up* that career.

[2]Although the argument of this essay is to suggest that ROME, OPEN CITY does not make as fundamental a break from previous cinematic narratives as has been commonly asserted, it should not be seen as paradoxical that Godard was strongly influenced by it. For in the context of its particular historical juncture, the film and those that followed it do make great inroads toward a rethinking of conventional narrative forms, a rethinking further extended, of course, by Godard himself. On the other hand, from our *present* perspective we can see the limitations of Rossellini's break from his narrative precedents and see that *today* it is no longer possible to claim his work as *absolutely* exemplary. This awareness is implicit in Godard's practice, of course, since he uses Rossellini as a starting point (in certain respects) for his own work. Godard's work makes the break from the underlying structures of illusionist narrative that Rossellini's does not.

[3]*Screen*, 14:4. All quotations from Rossellini's interviews are from this volume.

[4]This article is fundamentally concerned with issues of form rather than of content largely because it is the *formal* aspects of Rossellini's work that have been ignored in the majority of criticism thus far published. On the other hand, it should not be thought that I *discount* questions of content or that I underestimate the force of, for instance, ROME, OPEN CITY's engagement with the intensely topical issues of the time of its making: its identification with the forces of liberation from fascism in the final days of the 2nd World War, its pointers toward a marxist society for the future. These aspects have been treated (whether adequately or not is not my purpose to evaluate at this time) in most discussions of the film, whether in Rossellini's reminiscences of the period or accounts such as those of Roy Armes in *Patterns of Realism*.

[5]The term 'bourgeois illusionist cinema' refers both to a concept of art that makes art's function to reveal universal, eternal truths about 'human nature' and to a series of conventions that have tended to operate in support of that concept, particularly since the early 19th Century and the rise of a literate bourgeois class in industrial society. These conventions were transferred almost intact to the cinema.

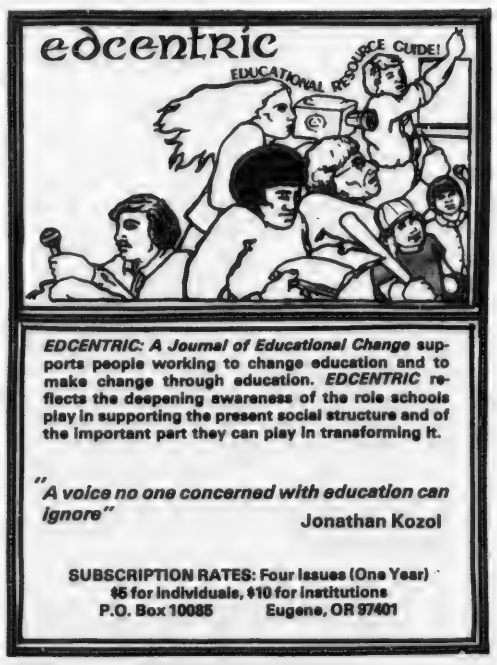
It is possible to trace the origins of cinematic illusionism to a number of sources. First, the tradition of oil-painting with its mimetic perspectival foundations from the 15th Century on is important even though it is only more recently that oil-painting has become a part of the bourgeois world. (In an ironic inversion of Walter Benjamin's hopes, the techniques of mass reproduction have allowed the cooptation and fetishization of art in a manner which has led to the widespread appearance in this era of the 'sofa-sized painting' in colors to match your home, in a beautiful frame of your choice,' but that's another story.) Central is the pre-19th Century emphasis on the illusion of three-dimensions which is created through perspective techniques on a two-dimensional surface, and the corresponding attempt at a painstakingly accurate 'reproduction of reality' (or, rather, reality idealized, perfected, fantasized), insofar as it is this function of painting that was usurped by still photography after 1840 and then transferred to motion pictures.

Secondly, we must note the seminal influence of the 19th Century realist novel (see Colin McCabe's article "Realism and the Cinema" in *Screen*, 15:2) with its use of the identification technique of the omniscient narrator among other structural anchors. Thirdly, the theater of the later 19th Century with its conventions of stage naturalism (Ibsen, Strindberg, etc.) impregnated the elaboration of cinematic codes and conventions, specifically in decor and acting.

In short, bourgeois illusionism in cinema partakes of aspects of theatrical, literary and painterly conventions of the 19th Century and earlier and conceives of art as a 'window on the world' or a mirror of reality: this attempt is dependent upon an attempted fusion of signifier and signified in which the materiality of language, the work of signification, is repressed from view in favor of the dominance of the signified. Language is thus conceived of as a transparent means to knowledge of the world beyond, through the window. The materiality of language is eliminated as far as possible in the attempt to show us the world 'as it is,' unalterable, eternal. Continuity editing is but one example of this attitude at work in film--the cuts are meant to be invisible; the language of editing functions simply to show the real world 'unified' before the camera. It is through such techniques that the illusionist director is able to efface himself and his activity from our perception of the events on the screen. With Rossellini we are not aware of the camera-movements per se but rather focus upon the object/person to/with which the camera is moving. In fact, the director (whether Rossellini, Ford or Capra) is in total control, but the evidence of that control is suppressed as far as possible. As Whistler once wrote, "It takes endless labour to eradicate the traces of labour."

[6]As the quotations from Walter Benjamin (in *Illuminations*) begin to suggest, Rossellini's approach to history (and both ROME, OPEN CITY and LOUIS XIV are historical films) is fundamentally humanist and idealist: and in this respect it is appropriate that the *form* of these films is illusionist, in support of that idealist content. But it is crucial to note that the *history* that Rossellini proposes, whether in the moralist terms of the earlier film (the differences between fascist and humanist/marxist are described in moral terms rather than economic/political ones) or in terms of the emphasis upon spectacle as a means to power in LOUIS XIV, is hardly an adequate historical analysis in any real sense: as Chuck Kleinhans has pointed out to me, "Would any serious historian feel that Louis' reign was explained by this one device of spectacle?" Rather, it would be necessary to examine the "evolving political, economic and social relationships in the Europe of the time, leading to the establishment of the baroque state."

[7]When I say the films 'fix' the spectator as a *passive* spectator, this should not be taken to suggest that I or Rossellini see the audience as essentially dupes or uncritical voyeurs who simply swallow whatever is offered them. What *is* at issue are the structural tendencies of Rossellini's films which tend to minimize the spectator's active role. The spectators can only accept or reject the film's vision. The welter of historical detail, for instance, has an authority and an authenticity that is difficult to challenge; it has a meaning that is in a sense pre-determined, for it is fixed *prior* to the spectator's engagement with it. As Colin McCabe has put it, "The camera in Rossellini's films is not articulated as part of the productive process of the film. What it shows is in some sense beyond argument, and it is here that Rossellini's films show the traditional realist weakness of being unable to deal with contradiction." (*Screen*, 15:2, p. 20) Insofar as space for the viewer's potential engagement with the actual process of production of meaning is minimized, passivity is encouraged. ■



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CAR WASH

RESISTANCE AND REACTION AT THE CAR WASH

--Irwin Silber

At the risk of sounding somewhat preposterous, let me suggest an ideological connection between Lenin's "What Is To Be Done?" and a fairly lighthearted new film, CAR WASH.

First to the film, which concerns a day in the life of a group of workers—mostly Black—employed at a downtown Los Angeles car-washing emporium. There's not too much plot to this and what there is leaves much to be desired. What we get instead is an affectionate glimpse into a dozen assorted lives and a spirit of camaraderie—both class and national—which is a cultural building-block in the struggle to keep the human personality alive in the midst of alienated labor, petty indignities and the ever-present realities of white racism.

Black identity and pride are at the core of the film's statement—but never at the expense of a sense of class solidarity. It is readily apparent that the Mexican, Indian and white workers have a much greater affinity with their Black brothers than they do differences. The film's dividing line never falters in its delineation of the gap between the owner of the Car Wash and the workers. Not that Mr. B., the boss, is a dyed-in-the-wood villain. He's not. He just suffers from the natural afflictions of the petty entrepreneur and emerges more as a pathetic character than the object of intense class hatred. Nevertheless, there is no crossing over that great divide between worker and boss.

The joy of the film is in the immense survival spirit of the workers, their sense of themselves as individuals, the immense variations in individual personality which not only prevail over their socialized labor but are actually reinforced by it.

A parade of characters passes through the car wash's prophylactic portals during the course of the day's labor and while they are an exaggerated lot, the southern California setting makes them somewhat more credible than they might be almost anywhere else in the U.S.

The film's comic riches are set off by the iron grains of reality which constantly hover around its edges and occasionally place their mark on the proceedings: an ex-con, unnecessarily visited on the job by his parole officer, a cloud of fear suddenly enveloping a man who had previously appeared impenetrable; a prostitute who has rather casually turned a trick in the storage room suddenly revealing the depths of loneliness in a whispered "good-bye" to her momentary "lover"; in addition to the horseplay, little acts of class vengeance against a straw-boss foreman.

All of this helps portray the essential vigor and creativity of the working class and, in particular, that inventive culture of "resistance" which has become the hallmark of contemporary Black identity.

Now before applying Lenin to this, a word of warning to those who think that film criticism should be limited to the "intentions of the filmmakers." All such may now prepare for the worst.

CAR WASH is an enjoyable film whose essential strength rests in its respect for the spontaneous culture of working-class and Black survival. In fact, one may even say that it respects this spontaneity to the point of deification—just as Lenin pointed out how certain trends in the early Russian communist movement worshipped the spontaneity of the working class and elevated this, ultimately, into a "theory" that caused them constantly to tail behind the class struggle.

Now the producers of CAR WASH are hardly aspiring to revolutionary theory. They just want to turn a buck and, in the process of creating a film for that recently discovered market of Black filmgoers, they have managed to tap the vast reservoir of class consciousness and national identity which Black workers possess. But however unintentionally, the filmmakers have advanced a "theory" which in several respects is in tune with the more "conscious" arguments put forward by those economists Lenin was polemicizing against in "What Is To Be Done?"—and, more to the point, have their echoes in our movement today.

This is demonstrated most pointedly in the film's treatment of politics and women.

OUTSIDE AGITATORS

Two examples of "politics" are offered by CAR WASH. Communism is represented by the boss's son, Irwin, who wears a Mao T-shirt, is constantly quoting the Red Book to the workers and tells his dad that he wants to get a job "working with the men" rather than totaling up figures in the office. He also takes "grass" breaks and is, of course, driven to and from work by his father. The workers treat his "revolutionary" enthusiasms with amused tolerance.

The other political stance is represented by a "chip-on-the-shoulder" worker who is a recent convert to Black nationalism. Again, the politics is trivialized by placing it "outside" the real world of Black workers who likewise find it more a matter of mirth than moment.

In this sense, CAR WASH poses the day-to-day practical experience of the working class against the "abstract" theory of those who would politicize it. Politics becomes the "outside agitator" against the common sense of the masses who presumably know far better how to deal with the realities of exploitation and oppression than do those who uphold dogmatic convictions. (That dogmatists aplenty abound among those who would be revolutionaries is undeniable, but the intimation of the film is that such dogmatism is the inevitable characteristic of political agitation.)

The film's portrayal of women is unashamedly sexist—not only in its stereotyping of the handful of women characters in it but even more in its glorification of the backward male supremacist attitudes of the workers. Are these workers bad? No. They are, however, woefully typical in the values which guide their views of and relations with women. But when one worships at the fountain of spontaneity, the result is an objective justification of all the characteristics of the spontaneous movement, even its most backward expressions.

Well, then, which is the main aspect of the film—its "positive" appreciation of class and national pride or its "negative" catering to backward ideology? I'm afraid the answer is the latter. To celebrate the cultural vitality of the working class is to recognize a certain reality. But CAR WASH turns that reality into its opposite by reinforcing those very backward attitudes which are an indispensable part of the bourgeoisie's apparatus of ideological control—the very devices used to neutralize the energy, militancy and unity of the working class.

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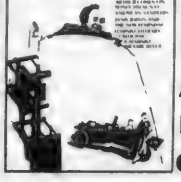

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THREE PENNY OPERA
Brecht vs Pabst

--Jan-Christopher Horak

The contrast was striking. Bertolt Brecht's *Three Penny Opera* was an anarchistic vision of urban society, tempered by a sharp cynical wit, and an episodic form that had its roots in the cabaret. G. W. Pabst's less cynical film version, on the other hand, presented a dramatically unified narrative, enhanced by realistic studio sets and an expressive use of light and shadow. Critics regarded it as a typical case of an insensitive, bourgeois-capitalist film industry draining an avant-garde work of its revolutionary content (and form) for the sake of profit. Brecht sued the producers but lost, proving once again to B. B.'s supporters the power of private investment over public interest, capital over art.

The previously unknown quantity in this controversy, though, has been Brecht's treatment of the proposed film version. In it Brecht attempted to politicize his opera in order to clarify certain ideological intentions that had been misread by the public. First, by eliminating a number of characters and scenes, he hoped to unify the narrative while mitigating the opera's slightly decadent atmosphere. Second, Brecht substituted a more revolutionary finale for the patently gratuitous ending of his original, thereby making overt the equation between criminals and capitalists. It becomes clear, then, that a number of structural as well as textual changes, previously blamed on Pabst, were in fact first introduced in Brecht's treatment, only to be refined and clarified in the final film.

Furthermore, one must consider that (1) many of Brecht's plays are not programatically Marxist; (2) Pabst's leftist sensibilities as manifested in the plot of the film version are at least as politically committed as Brecht's decidedly modernist opera;[1] (3) the acting style remains Brechtian, due largely to the influence of Lotte Lenya, Carola Neher, and others from the stage production. The issues surrounding the THREE PENNY OPERA, then, are much more complex than they seem at first.

According to Lotte Lenya, Brecht first became interested in adapting John Gay's 18th century satire, *The Beggar's Opera*, after his co-worker, Elizabeth Hauptmann, translated the work into German. Working with the composer, Kurt Weill, Brecht fashioned an "opera" more akin to the Berlin cabaret than to the legacy of Mozart or Wagner. For his adaptation Brecht moved the action from the London of Gay's time to the late Victorian period, an era closer to Brecht's own experience. As a result, too, Brecht made the bourgeoisie, rather than the aristocracy, the object of his satire. Brecht's songs appeared in almost every scene, usually set apart from the action by special lighting, with the actors simply stepping stage front. The songs commented on the action rather than developing from it, because as Brecht put it, "Nothing is more revolting than when an actor pretends not to notice that he (sic) has left the level of plain speech and started to sing."[3]

For a number of songs, Brecht made use of ballads by Francois Villon, translated by K. L. Ammer in an edition out of print since 1909. As a result, the first *Three Penny Opera* scandal erupted in May 1929, when Alfred Kerr, the famed Berlin theater critic, accused Brecht of plagiarism. Brecht in fact relished such a scandal as a means of thumbing his nose at the pettiness of bourgeois culture. He simply published a note acknowledging the omission but stating that he never worried about such mundane matters. Meanwhile, the opera gained a notorious reputation as a semi-pornographic work.

For months the opera ran on the Berlin stage, while "The Ballad of Mack the Knife" became a popular hit tune. The hedonistic middle classes of the late Weimar Republic, enjoying the first economic upswing in more than 10 years, loved every minute of it. According to Martin Esslin, "his sudden success made Brecht cocky."[4] The angry young poet of revolutionary verse may have been experiencing a disorientation common to modernist artists. As Irving Howe has noted:

> In the war between modernist culture and bourgeois society . . .the middle class has discovered that the fiercest attacks upon its values can be transposed into pleasing entertainments, and the avant-garde writer or artist must confront the one challenge for which he (sic) has not been prepared: the challenge of success. Contemporary society is endlessly assimilative, even if it tames and vulgarizes what it has learned, sometimes foolishly to praise.[5]

Despite (or because of) its brutal satire of bourgeois values and its intentional vulgarity, calculated to shock well-mannered sensibilities, the opera won critical acclaim. The communist press, on the other hand, most prominently the main organ of the German Communist Party, *Die Rote Fahne*, attacked the play for its lack of social concreteness.[6]

The dichotomy between Brecht's modernism and his Marxist commitment was clearly evident. The London underworld, with its cynical prostitutes, petty thieves, confidence men, and corrupt officials, as well as the opera's amoral and polygamous hero, fascinated audiences instead of repelling them. On the formal level, the fragmented narrative, non-naturalistic acting, ever-present posters, and cabaret atmosphere underscored the modernist and anarchistic content of the opera: the grim urban setting, the aggressive attack on traditional culture in favor of popular culture, and the disbelief in social order or philosophical unity.

Brecht's study of Marxism (beginning in 1927) influenced the work, especially with regard to some of the more rhetorical songs, but the opera's basic cynicism seems to contradict its revolutionary aims. The early Brecht who had written the violently nihilistic "Man Equals Man" and the anarchic "In the Jungle of the Cities" still held sway over the Marxist in him. The opera's "Song of the Heavy Cannon," sun by the British Indian Army buddies Mack and Tiger Brown, seems to hark back to the British India setting of "Man Equals Man."

Brecht was well aware of the problem. In his published notes to the opera he attempted to clarify his intentions: namely, the parallel between "the lesser duplicities and betrayals, the thievery of the underworld with the more seemingly respectable but crasser and more thoroughgoing iniquities of the upper world."[7] The gangster Mack the Knife and the capitalist entrepreneur Peachum were products of the same decadent culture.

During the course of 1929, then, Brecht became much more polemical in his attitude towards theater. He attempted to guard himself against any further misunderstandings by writing didactic works that had their genesis in the notion of *Gebrauchskunst*, or practical and propagandistic art. It was in June 1930, while producing *He Who Says No* and *The Measures Taken*, two of his most austere pieces, that Brecht completed the treatment for the screen version of the THREE PENNY OPERA.

Surprisingly, Brecht's film treatment, published the same year under the title of *Die Beule* (The Bruise), deviated substantially from the opera. In an effort to correct the ideological inconsistencies of the opera, Brecht tightened up the narrative by eliminating certain characters and rearranging many of the events. He also drastically reduced the number of songs, virtually eliminated the streetsinger, and included at least one song written specifically for the film.

In Brecht's original opera the so-called Beggar-King, Peachum, wants the criminal Macheath (alias Mack the Knife) arrested for eloping with his daughter, Polly. Although the police chief, Tiger Brown, has previously managed to protect Mack (for a fee, of course), Peachum threatens to send his beggars into the streets on the day of the queen's coronation unless Mack is hanged. The police arrest Mack while he is visiting Jenny, a prostitute and ex-lover, who betrays him for money and out of jealousy. Mack is freed, however, with the help of Lucy, the daughter of Tiger Brown. Finally he is arrested a second time while visiting another prostitute, Sucky Tawdry. Tongue in cheek, Brecht gives his opera an "American happy end" by having Mack saved from hanging in honor of the queen's coronation; a country estate and life-time pension are thrown in for good measure.

In Brecht's screen treatment, Macheath is a considerably less promiscuous, thoroughly middle-class thief, who becomes a bank director during the course of the narrative. The struggle between Mack and Peachum is carried out within the framework of capitalist competition: one of Peachum's beggars reports a robbery committed by Mack's gang to the police. In retaliation, Mack's men rob Peachum's office and beat up one of his beggars. That Mack has seduced Peachum's daughter only adds insult to injury.

Mack's improved social standing is reflected most prominently in the revised marriage scene. In the opera the event is held in an old barn attended by Mack's gang and Tiger Brown. In the film treatment the marriage scene is prefaced by a title, "A Social Occasion," with no less than 150 dignitaries in attendance, including "the Chief Justice of Drury Lane, two members of the House of Lords, three well-known barristers, a priest from St. Margaret's, . . .Tiger Brown."[8]

Peachum's beggars undergo a similar transformation. Whereas in the opera they are characterized as Lumpenproletariat, wretchedly poor and unemployable, in the film treatment they become professional beggars--employees of Peachum's Beggar Trust. Coming to work in the morning dressed in blue-collar attire, they slip into their work clothes and are thus magically transformed into the pathetic cripples they appear to be. (This scene remains intact in Pabst's film version.)

Another scene newly conceived for the treatment was the temporary transformation of Drury Lane's brothels into respectable-looking homes for the queen's coronation. Brecht describes the removal of all unsavory-looking

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--Elliot Ross

characters as well as the repainting of the facades along the queen's route, apparently indicating visually capitalism's attempt to use surface wealth to cover the squalor of the backstreets.

Finally, of major significance is Brecht's conclusion: Tiger Brown has a dream about the masses overrunning the streets of London with neither police nor tanks an effective counterweapon. It is, of course, a capitalist's nightmare of a successful proletarian revolution. Because of the dream, Brown (government) and Peachum (corporate power) join forces to free Mack, realizing that the workers are their true enemies. Together they place Peachum's bruised beggar in the death cell previously occupied by Mack. Thus, Brecht works out a Marxist conception of events by pitting the capitalist employers against the proletarian employees.

In terms of film form, Brecht also had his own ideas. He proposed to divide the film into four major sections, each part being divided into a number of subsections preceded by a written title indicating content--for example, "The Power of the Beggar King," "The Historic Change of Ownership of the National Deposit Bank," or "The Ride of the Messengers." These titles acted as distancing devices much as posters did on the stage; Brecht considered it regrettable that talkies no longer used them.

Brecht's relocation of Mack's arrest from the Drury Lane brothel to a picnic in the country also seems to have been motivated by filmic considerations. In a possible tribute to Chaplin (the only filmmaker Brecht ever acknowledged having respected), Mack is arrested after a high-speed car chase: a car full of prostitutes followed by a carload of Keystone-like cops. A number of other car scenes--the gang's getaway after a robbery and later their respectable arrival at the bank in new limousines--were also

included.

In a further attempt to make the film less theatrical, Brecht cut down the role of the streetsinger, who appears frequently in the opera making ironic comments directly to the audience. In the film treatment, the singer appears only once in the first scene, singing his "Ballad of Mack the Knife" to a group of people rather than to the audience. As in Pabst's film, he is realistically integrated into the narrative.

For the first part of the film, Brecht even developed fairly exact camera directions. Though Pabst shot the first section as suggested, it is clear that the others are unworkable:

> The first section should flow without cuts or jumps. (The face of Polly Peachum is not shown until Macheath sees it.) The second section is cross-cut between two connected situations: the lovers promenade and the stealing of the bridal trousseau, both photographed differently: one soft and flowing, the other sharp and montage-like. The third section (the marriage) shows single unconnected still lifes; the camera finds its motifs, it is sociology.[9]

Whatever may have happened between Brecht and Pabst (see Lotte Eisner for incomplete details), it is clear that Brecht left the project before a script was completed. So the Marxist screenwriter and critic Bela Balazs was called in to finish the script with Leo Lania and Ladislaus Vajda.[10]

The finished script, while incorporating some of Brecht's plot alterations, also includes material from the opera as well as a new ending. Once again Mack is a small-time gangster with middle class aspirations whose polygamy and various liaisons with "professional" women keep him running. The script's major innovation, however, is the expansion of Polly Peachum's role. In the final script it is Polly who decides to buy the City Bank after threatening to turn Mack's whole gang over to the police unless they surrender the loot they have been embezzling during Mack's sojourn in jail. Mack's two-bit crooks become bank directors and stock market manipulators under her tight-fisted control: "We're through with romanticism, now the seriousness of life begins," she says.[11]

Peachum and Brown, on the other hand, meet a very different end. The revenge-crazed Peachum is destroyed when his own beggars turn against him. The last shot in the script is held on Peachum as he stumbles off into the distance, a broken and lonely man. Brown also loses his job as police chief after the beggars manage to disrupt the queen's coronation. Although he was ready to hang Macheath, Brown now joins forces with him; he buys himself a directorship in the City Bank with the bail money he has salvaged--that is, stolen. As a true bureaucrat, Brown remains indestructible. (This twist would be carried one step further in the film to include Peachum's fate.)

It can be seen, then, that the scriptwriters critically modified Brecht's leftist polemics. First, they locate the genesis of the Peachum-Macheath struggle in personal revenge rather than economic competition. Secondly, by destroying Peachum, the writers suggest a moralistically tinted fate due to character weakness rather than social class.

To the scriptwriters' credit, it must be noted that they incorporated as much of Brecht's dialogue as possible, often interpolating dialogue from deleted sections. Brecht not only used street slang effectively but also anglicisms and idiomatic phrases uncommon to the German language. Thus, the flavor of Brecht's language was retained in the script as well as in Pabst's film.

In the finished film Pabst actually took a step back toward Brecht's conception by utilizing many more suggestions from Brecht's treatment. Thus, Mack's second wife, Lucy (who had resurfaced in the script) disappeared again, while many of the secondary characters were also eliminated. The plot was further condensed by having Mack arrested only once, as in Brecht's treatment.

Once again, Macheath is a member of the upwardly mobile middle classes--a small-time capitalist. His larceny operation is run like a business, with production schedules and well-kept accounting books; lazy thieves are given the ax. Mack's whoring is also very businesslike: he is almost arrested because he refuses to cancel his regular Thursday afternoon visit to the brothel.

The ending obviously reflects Pabst's sympathy for Brecht's more radical point of view. After the beggars revolt, Peachum allies himself with Mack and Tiger Brown. Peachum has a new business venture, to be financed by the gentlemen from the City Bank. Thus, Mack's rise from small business crook to banking magnate is paralleled by Brown's and Peachum's falls, since both have literally become thieves.

As they sign the contracts in the half-lit bank, the streetsinger's epilogue (which only appears in Brecht's treatment) is heard. The atmosphere turns bleak in the last shot, when a dejected mass is seen wandering from darkness under a streetlamp into darkness. Pabst's lighting underlines the conspiratorial mood, while his last cut establishes a cause-and-effect relationship, thereby reinforcing the dialogue and the streetsinger's (Brecht's) final lines:

Peachum:	Today I've seen the power of the poor... your money and my business experience, a mighty business.
Mack:	Why do they need us if they are so powerful?
Peachum:	They don't know it, but it is us who need them.
Streetsinger's Voice:	Gathered for the happy ending All crowd under the same hat. If good money is quite handy, Everything ends well for that. Hinz and Kunz fish muddy waters, Wish each other dead. Yet in the end around the table They share the poor man's bread Therefore some live in darkness And others in light. We see those who live in the daytime But not those who live at night.[12]

Another scene in keeping with Brecht's spirit contains some anti-Nazi sentiment. In the scene, expanded from the script, Peachum incites his beggars to riot. As the frenzied Hitler-like speech continues, Pabst intercuts Peachum's evergrowing shadow. The expressionistic shadow monster of the "haunted screen" is finally given concrete political context by Pabst. By giving the speech to Peachum, Pabst implies that the power of the Nazis comes from the respectable bourgeoisie rather than the working classes. An astute observation for 1930.

It is in Pabst's direction of actors, though, that he comes closest to the Brechtian conception of "epic" theater. The dialogue in the film is cut down to the barest minimum, almost silent film standards.[13] The very terseness creates a Brechtian alienation effect, especially when coupled with a dead-pan delivery, as in Polly and Mack's farewell scene. Instead of looking deeply into each others eyes and swearing eternal love, as film conventions demand, the actors face the camera; their lines are delivered in a monotone and their faces remain expressionless. The romanticism of the dialogue is ironically undercut by the unemotional acting, thus "objectifying" the characters. Here the contributions of Brecht's original cast--Carola Neher (Polly), Ernst Buch (streetsinger), Lotte Lenya (Jenny), and Herman Thimig (Vicar)--must not be underestimated.

In terms of formal dramaturgy, though, Pabst's design stands in opposition to Brecht's theoretical canons. Pabst's Reinhardt-like chiaroscuro highlights the many night scenes along the misty Soho waterfront. Pabst's use of light and shadow for dramatic effect violates Brecht's conceptions of epic theater. As Brecht put it: "How can we playwrights and actors put forth our view of the world in half-darkness? The dim twilight induces sleep."[14] Thus, the lighting in most of Brecht's own productions (if existing stills are an indication) was flat and bright.

At the same time Brecht's stage only alludes to locale: a desk suggests an office; a bed, a brothel; and a streetsign, an avenue. The sparseness of the set undermines the illusion of reality, producing the desired alienation effect. Pabst's realistic mise-en-scene and Fritz Arno Wagner's moving camera, on the other hand, capture actors, background action, and atmospheric details in an ever changing pattern of complex visual designs. Pabst's invisible editing further reenforces the spatial and temporal relationships implied by the moving camera. Thus, the unbroken flow of images and the realism of the set almostcompel the viewers to involve themselves in the drama of the events.

To be sure, Brecht's intentions are totally opposite. Developing an audience's involvement in the action is condemned by Brecht, because it results in an emotional rather than an intellectual perception. By fragmenting the narrative, the audience is forced to reconstruct the events and their ideological implications. So goes the theory.

Ironically, while Pabst's realistic mise-en-scene could not have been further from Brecht's modernist aesthetics on a formal level, communist critics such as Georg Lukács championed realism over modernism, unity over fragmentation. Lukács, in contrast to the theoretical pronouncements of both Brecht and Eisenstein, believed that only a realistic form could support socialism's unified world view. And, as Lukács rightly pointed out, Brecht in his mature works transcended the "over simplified schema" of his didactic period to achieve a synthesis of Aristotelean dramaturgy and agitprop.[15]

I do not mean to suggest that Pabst has qualitatively achieved the same kind of synthesis in his film, but I do think he is moving in that direction. One need only to compare Brecht's cynical conclusion to the opera with Pabst's finale, where--to borrow another phrase from Lukács--the streetsinger's lines "elevate the personal fates of the characters to the typical."[16] In Brecht's opera the characters remain caricatures; in Pabst's film a certain humanity breaks through. The objectified Brechtian acting within a realistic framework again suggests Brecht's later synthesis.

Brecht's opera, as we have seen, is not as ideologically pure as he would have us believe, nor is Pabst's film as apolitical as Brecht charged. Both works are to be valued in their own right, although to my mind, Pabst's film is ideologically more correct from a Marxist point of view. One can argue, then, that despite Brecht's objections to the film, Pabst's version of THE THREE PENNY OPERA is the most Brechtian film adaptation of Brecht's work to date.

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[1]I am taking my definition of modernism from Irving Howe's *Literary Modernism*, and Georg Lukács' *Realism in our Time*. That is I use it in both the philosophical sense (nihilism, anarchism) and in the formal sense as an

anti-realist fragmentation of narrative.

[2]Willet, John, *The Theater of Bertolt Brecht* (New York: New Directions, 1968) p. 30.

[3]Brecht, Bertolt, *Brecht on Theater*, trans. by John Willet (New York: Hill & Wang, 1964) p. 46.

[4]Esslin, Martin, *Brecht--The Man and his Work* (New York: Anchor Books, 1961) p. 38.

[5]Howe, Irving, *Literary Modernism* (Greenwich, Conn: Fawcett Publishers, 1967) p. 24.

[6]Esslin, p. 153.

[7]Brecht, Bertolt, quoted in *Bertolt Brecht* by Frederic Ewen (New York: Citadel Press, 1967) p. 175.

[8]Brecht, Bertolt, "Die Beule" in *Das Dreigroschenbuch* (Frankfurt/Main: Surkamp Verlag, 1973) p. 105. Trans. by J. C. Horak. Book also includes Brecht's notes, the published opera, as well as contemporary reviews.

[9]Ibid, p. 105.

[10]Eisner, Lotte, *The Haunted Screen* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969) p. 344.

[11]Manvell, Roger, *Masterworks of the German Cinema* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973). Includes THREE PENNY OPERA screenplay as quoted from the film. In the screenplay the scene appears in a similar form, p. 247.

[12]Ibid, p. 276. Pabst's new ending has been quoted in notes.

[13]Ibid, p. 264.

[14]Willet, p. 161.

[15]Lukács, Georg, *Realism in Our Time* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1971) p. 88-89.

[16]Ibid, p. 101. ■

THE ENFORCER
'ADOLPH' EASTWOOD

--Charles D. Leayman

Webster's 3rd New International Dictionary defines "fascism" as "any tendency toward or actual exercise of severe autocratic or dictatorial control." The filmic persona of Clint Eastwood's Dirty Harry Callahan, San Francisco Police, exhibits more than one "tendency" that eminently qualifies him for the "fascistic" label. That the films in which the character appears (including DIRTY HARRY and MAGNUM FORCE) have been among the most successful American movies of the 70s indicates the great extent to which audiences share the ideologies of the filmmakers.

What audiences are chiefly responding to is the fetishization of law enforcement, both in the awesome figure of Harry himself and in the Magnum .44 that he so spectacularly wields. The attraction of such fetishizing is in nurturing a markedly emotional hero worship while implicitly or explicitly espousing release from fear by force. And make no mistake, the filmmakers deliberately include a massive helping of our fears in their pernicious brew.

Accordingly, the media treatments of police and their procedures almost always are just such mindless celebrations: punch-and-sock displays of lawmen, guns, indeed all the paraphernalia of law enforcement, that allow no room for the thoughtful consideration of what we're being shown. At a time when we most need clear information about the workings of the police among us--about their exact function in our society--we are fed instead a debilitating diet of furtively glorified violence and sentimentalized retribution.

Herein lies the chief offense of the "Dirty Harry" films. Their continuing apotheosis of Clint Eastwood in the role of Harry Callahan, the San Francisco cop who must repeatedly buck a weak, hypocritical City Hall and take law enforcing matters into his own hands, not only promulgates a sophisticated form of hero worship that pretends not to take itself too seriously but also slips us (in the form of "entertainment," naturally) reams of false information about the supposed "reality" of Harry's (and, by extension, our) world.

This time out the unflappable Callahan is pitted against a group of degenerate no-goods who bill themselves as the People's Revolutionary Strike Force (though their only social aspirations reside in lining their pockets). It's led by one Bobby Maxwell, an ex-Vietnam vet all duded up in a Hollywood costume designer's notion of urban funk (denims, headband, a little skin juxtaposed with some lethal hardware to strike a fashionably S-M note), and his compendium of outrageous crimes adds up to a ridiculous caricature of criminality. After preying upon assorted citizens mostly for the sheer hell of it, the group decides to kidnap San Francisco's mayor (another foolish caricature), spiriting him off to now-deserted Alcatraz Island to await the forthcoming ransom.

The narrative on Harry's side is tricked up with the addition of a female rookie (Tyne Daly) as his partner. The star's chagrin at finding himself strapped with a "lady" sidekick is milked for far, far more than its pea-size laugh-getting potential. His initial meeting with her during official examination vigorously flaunts his pathetic, reactionary misogyny in the viewer's face. One hopes that the story will at least resolve itself into a recognition of equals, with Harry finally coming to recognize female prowess. But no such luck: The film so enjoys patronizing and laughing at Daly's character that it affords her "equal" status with Callahan only in the act of killing a man. In THE ENFORCER, Clint Eastwood more than proves his willingness to associate himself with projects that are frankly demeaning to women. (His similar enthusiasm for maligning homosexuals is thoroughly and revoltingly documented in THE EIGER SANCTION, which Eastwood himself directed, and his climactic cursing here of THE ENFORCER's Bobby Maxwell as a "fucking fruit!" reassures us that his sensibilities remain as enlightened as ever.)

Just as before, Harry's monstrous Magnum .44 is the fascist fetish par excellence; he has only to unsheath it for the audience to lapse into oohs! and aahs! of appreciation. Needless to say, both gun and man are viewed as inextricable, one proceeding logically from the other. The script may recognize its own phallic absurdity (in some of the most leaden "comic" dialogue heard in years), but Harry and the audience take seriously the unabashed power of the weapon. And the use of the wide-rectangle, Panavision frame is anything but arbitrary: ever since Don Siegel's original DIRTY HARRY, Panavision's endless expanse has made all those low-angle shots of Eastwood all the more dramatically imposing (for an antecedent to this strategy, check out Leni Riefenstahl's TRIUMPH OF THE WILL), has rendered the star's gliding horizontal walk all the more charismatic, and (best of all!) can bring every last inch of that totemic .44 into full view, and with room to spare. (The second Harry opus, Ted Post's MAGNUM FORCE, took the most memorable advantage of this ability by playing its credit titles over the gun's length so that we could soak up its unsung power at our leisure--although, at the finish of the titles, the hand holding the weapon turned it in the audience's direction and FIRED!!!, thereby affording latent masochism its finest *frisson*.)

Carrying on its fine tradition, THE ENFORCER stoops to the consistent use of what I propose to call "trigger words"--terms designed to elicit a particular response from those hearing them--the most blatant example of which is "People's Revolutionary Strike Force" with bursts of "Right On!" and "Power to the People!" Having just gone through a year of being inundated with news of Patty Hearst and SLA activities, and having come out of a decade when the two quoted exclamations were intimately linked to various forms of organized militancy, our minds offer up readymade associations (most of which have been helpfully supplied by the news media) on hearing such words. In a film extolling the virtues of a fascistic personality in a society whose officials are hamstrung, the script's equation of these terms with criminal behavior functions expressly to convince us of their virtual synonymousness. So as not to be accused of "irresponsibility," screenwriters Stirling Silliphant and Dean Riesner have inserted at least one visual bit that at best ambiguously undercuts the equation and later place another disclaimer in the mouth of a black militant who assures Harry that the marauders "don't really believe in that shit" ("that shit" being actual revolutionary activity). But the force of the imagery and the reiteration of key words ("People's Revolutionary Strike Force") work subtly to indoctrinate the audience with a deliberate word/image association that reflects the film's reactionary ideology.

In similar ways, the visuals are chosen to support, either overtly or with relative discretion, the filmmakers' personal perspectives. When Harry and his partner leave a ghetto store inhabited by black militants, the camera "just happens" to pick out a hammer and sickle executed in red paint on the storefront. Nothing is made of the emblem, and indeed a viewer could easily miss it. And yet, it exists in the fabric of the film, contributing its bit to a fuzzy but discernible thematic line that roughly adds up to "revolution-militancy-blacks-Communists-violence-crime."

By an extremely neat scriptwriter's trick, the so-called "black militants" are effectively defused by both Harry's imperturbability and the script's alertness to its audience's fears. While the storefront blacks are visually rendered as dark and threatening, Harry's encounter with their leader, Mustafa, discloses a policy of pragmatic opportunism on the part of the blacks that actually allies them with white forces of law and order. Thus, the potential for extreme change that the presence of the blacks evokes is short-circuited by the script's castration of Mustafa's hatred of "honkies." Once again, the white order as personified by Harry Callahan is able to absorb (in this case with smug aplomb) any threats to its existence.

But, you may ask, why take seriously an enterprise designed simply as a relatively mindless diversion? Before answering, I would like to include an especially interesting excerpt from Warner Brothers' publicity flyer for THE ENFORCER:

> ".....'The Enforcer' and the pictures that preceded it are contemporary pictures. They deal with the kinds of crime problems that spread through so many cities today. They also suggest the kinds of solutions that might stamp out crime.
>
> But these aren't pictures for proselytizing. Their first responsibility is entertainment....Let the action be crisp

and vivid and fast. Have characters that run a whole range--some good, some bad, but all believable.

And that brings us to the prime source for the box office bonanza. He's no beautiful being on a pinnacle; Clint comes on like everyman. When you see him as Dirty Harry, you could swear you're watching a guy around the corner who's had it up to here. He wants no more from freaks ripping us down to their level. And when Clint goes on that way, he's someone you admire, or even want to be."

--copyright 1976, Warner Bros.

The most deceptive and odious feature of the above flack is its camouflaging of right-wing propaganda under a folksy heading of fun. The actual movie likewise disguises its far-right leanings beneath a panoply of jive music, slick imagery, and fledgling director James Fargo's skill with trashy material. To take but one example: Harry chases a black man suspected of bombing a public building across the roofs and through the alleys of San Francisco. Needless to say, Det. Callahan is completely convinced of the suspect's guilt before it has even been established (the continuing opposition between official caution and Harry's gut-level response to a suspect's character has become, like almost everything else in the Dirty Harry films, self-parodying). But the really offensive element here is the addition of a kinetic piece of pop music on the soundtrack that simultaneously deflects our attention away from Harry's presumptuous tactics and reduces the spectacle of white-cop-chasing-black-suspect to the level of a mere divertissement for the delectation of audiences who supposedly (according to the filmmakers' intuitions) enjoy such escapades.

Ultimately, THE ENFORCER is a stupid, brutalizing, and incoherent attraction that aims for an audience's most irresponsible feelings. Just because of its extreme (if insidious) sophistication--including the ability to laugh at itself--the film filters its half-truths and stereotypes to the public with painless ease. An unending panorama of equally numbing cop shows on TV has already set too many of us up to accept trash like THE ENFORCER even before the projector light comes on. The least we can do to defend ourselves is to take a long and perspective look (if look we must) into the ways and means of bourgeois filmmaking's so-called "dream machine."

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Seven Beauties

SURVIVAL, LINA-STYLE

--Richard Astle

SEVEN BEAUTIES is a stunning film. In one reviewer's words, "a bawdy and sacrilegious depiction of atrocity and amorality," it is both funnier than THE SEDUCTION OF MIMI and more beautiful (in a painterly sense) than the sexually-politically suspect SWEPT AWAY. Both Wertmuller and Giannini are at the top of their forms in SEVEN BEAUTIES, but what is presented in such beautifully photographed and composed footage, with such grace and humor, is a particular story with a particular message and moral content that we need to expose and examine if we are not to be aesthetically seduced and politically betrayed.

Wertmuller's anti-hero, a deserter from Mussolini's army, survives a German concentration camp by seducing the commandant, a woman. In his pre-war life, though he describes himself as "pretty ugly to begin with," he is called "Pasqualino Seven Beauties" because (as we see in the most exquisite--there is no other word for it--sequence in the film) he walks on a carpet of charm through the streets of Naples, flirting with women, who all flirt back. But life, and the concentration camp, have been hard on him. Before he can, as the commandant says, "reach

the end of his performance," she has to feed him: she understands, despite his protestations, that food and life are all he has come for. "First you eat, then you fuck," she says. "If you don't fuck, then kaput." Pasqualino survives, crawling up on the commandant's enormous body, made to appear more enormous (echoing a famous scene in MIMI) by Wertmuller's camera angles, and afterwards she tells him, "You disgust me. Your thirst for life disgusts me. You have no ideals. You have found the strength for an erection, that's why you'll survive. All our dreams for a master race--unattainable." Spoken by a Nazi, this evaluation is perhaps not yet ours, but she finds a way to drive him still lower: she puts him in charge of "stalag 23," his "living" unit within the camp, and orders him to "pick six men for extermination." If he refuses, she tells him, everyone in his stalag will be executed.

This situation recalls one in another film about Nazi Europe, Costa-Gavras' pseudo-documentary SPECIAL SECTION. This film, which tells the story of what happens when French communist resistance fighters assassinate a German officer in a subway station, is not nearly as slick as SEVEN BEAUTIES, but its political message is, perhaps for that reason, all the more clear. The Vichy French, in an attempt to forestall Nazi retaliation, create a special court to select a number of previously convicted minor political prisoners for execution. Perhaps these French are in some sense "worse" than Pasqualino, who only does what he is told. In any case, we are carefully shown that Costa-Gavras' Nazis, like Wertmuller's commandant, consider this act but one more proof of German moral superiority.

But despite the similarities, Costa-Gavras' radical tragedies are quite different in style and, ultimately, in political message from Wertmuller's existential tragi-comedies. In SPECIAL SECTION it is clear who the villains are, and as the film ends, like Z, with a report of the blatantly unjust fates of the various prisoners and court officials, the audience is left with a strong sense of the incomplete--a sign either of "bad art" or, as in Brecht and Godard, an incitement to the audience to complete the film in their own lives. This is an intentionally political cinema, and if it fails with American audiences, it is only because it is difficult to see the immediate relevance to the current political situation of the historical moment that was Vichy.

Wertmuller's film strikes a bit closer to home. Many Americans--one need only think of Patricia Hearst--are in prison camps faced with the same kind, if not necessarily the same magnitude, of decision. It is a particularly "existential" decision, that between some and many deaths, particularly when one of those many would be one's own. Francesco, a fellow Italian deserter with whom Pasqualino was captured, points out that to cooperate would mean, "We'll be like them." But to many of us--forgetting, perhaps, that they did, after all, save more lives than just their own--Pasqualino and the collaborators of the Special Section are worse even than the Nazis.

But in the last analysis, this moral choice is not what either of these films is about. The Vichy French had already begun to collaborate before they invented the Special Section; even the communists followed the Moscow line and adhered to the Hitler-Stalin pact. It is these earlier historical choices that generate the moral problematic of Costa-Gavras' film.

Wertmuller's fire is also directed elsewhere. In the words spoken over the dream-like opening sequence (which combines soft music and WWII documentary footage of bombs exploding, Hitler and Mussolini making speeches, men huddling in trenches), she defines the object of her critique as a particular petty bourgeois social type, "those who believe in their country...who should have been shot in the cradle...who believe in everything, even God...who worship the corporate image...who make love standing in their boots and imagine they are in a luxurious bed... who started early, haven't arrived, and don't know they aren't going to...who think that Jesus Christ is Santa Claus as a young man...who say, 'Now let's have a good laugh'"--it goes on and on. Pasqualino is no Everyman. He is not one of us. We might call him a petty bourgeois, small time hood. He is a particular individual in a particular historical setting, left in pre-war Naples at the head of a family of seven sisters and a mother who run a mattress factory while he patrols the streets flirting with women and playing status games with other men. He is a dandy and a man of what he calls "honor," which means that, in a society where the family is still of some social importance, when the Don asks him how he can expect to be respected while his sister wears "shoes with red bows" in a whorehouse, he defends her "virtue" by shooting her pimp.

But Pasqualino is also a bungler. He bungles this killing because he forgets to make sure his victim has a gun. He thus cannot claim "self-defense in a crime of passion" and has to find a way to make the body disappear. The Don tells him that this is his "chance to be a real man" and that "a real man has to do things normal people can't even imagine," so in another comic scene he chops the body up with an ax and sends it in suitcases to three different cities. But somehow he bungles here too, is arrested, and, to top it off, confesses. "I'm proud of it," he tells a lawyer his sister hires with her body. "I'm a man of honor." But the lawyer tells him he has but two choices left: the death sentence or an insanity plea.

Pasqualino's honor has not saved his sister's virtue; his death, even in his own terms, would be superfluous; and he chooses to live by imitating Mussolini in the prison yard and accepting a sentence of 12 years in a madhouse. From here it is a quick descent to saying "I'll do anything to live" in the last moment of the last flashback to his pre-war life. (Along the way he alienates his audience both politically--by saying "I like Mussolini, he made the other countries respect us"--and sexually-politically--by raping a woman in the madhouse whose limbs are tied to the four corners of a bed. Wertmuller, it seems, is taking no chances that anyone could, as in SWEPT AWAY, retain sympathy with her male-chauvinist, proto-fascist "hero.")

Against Pasqualino's abject surv[illegible]alism, Wertmuller presents the examples of two other prisoners: Francesco (with whom Pasqualini is arrested) and an unnamed aging anarchist who failed, he says, in three assassination attempts--Hitler, Mussolini and Salazar--because he was not very good at making bombs. When Pasqualino, in the prison camp, says he wants to survive to have children, the anarchist advises against it, speaking apocalyptically of a near future, overcrowded world in which whole families will kill each other for apples. And against the fascist-Nazi ideal of order this anarchist holds up what one is tempted to see as Wertmuller's "solution," and existentialist ideal of "man in disorder." The anarchist's last act, when the prisoners are assembled to hear Pasqualino read off the serial numbers of the six he has chosen for death, is to walk slowly out of formation, shout "I'm tired of living in terror, I'm a free man, I'll go jump in the shit--man in disorder" and dive into the cesspool, to be followed by bullets from the guards' machine guns.

If the anarchist's motivations, despite the concreteness of his act, seem a bit abstract and philosophical, the same cannot be said for Francesco, who is the next to rise to a superfluous death. Early in the film, before the first of the flashbacks to pre-war Naples, he and Pasqualino, wandering through beautifully misty German

forestland, come upon an orderly genocide scene and run away. "We're guilty too," Francesco says. "We didn't say anything or try to stop them." Pasqualino answers, truthfully if not correctly, "It would have been suicide." Later, in the prison camp after the anarchist's death, Francesco has had enough. Angry rather than philosophical, he shouts out "Pigs! Murderers!" and, after a scuffle, is about to be killed by the guards when the commandant once again twists the moral knife she has planted in Pasqualino's belly, ordering HIM to perform the execution. This is almost too much for Pasqualino--he hesitates until Francesco himself says, "Shoot--if you don't somebody else will--I'd rather it was you, you're a friend."

So Pasqualino shoots his best friend in the head with a pistol provided by one of the guards, and the camera surveys the scene--the men kneeling in formation, the guards, the commandant, and Pasqualino standing, head bowed, with the pistol in his hand, feeling his own guilt but doing nothing about it, rising to no gesture, merely surviving. Both his honor and the thirst for life that replaces it have led him to a killing; both times he kills for a woman, both times he stands shattered afterwards. It is only a final irony when the scene shifts to post-war Naples and we see Pasqualino return home to find not only his seven sisters, but his mother and even his lover, wearing lipstick and shoes with red bows. He speaks to his lover: "Even you've become a whore?" "Yes." "Good. Now quit, and we'll get married. I want lots of kids--we've got to defend ourselves"--reversing, grotesquely, the message of the anarchist's overpopulation speech. And then there is a last shot, hard to describe, an extreme closeup of his face after his mother tells him, "Don't think about the past--you're alive." His eyes shift, from upper right to dead left, and he answers, slowly, sadly, "Yes, I'm alive."

We are left wondering what is the point of this film, which seems to condemn survival in favor of individualistic, self-righteous suicide. Again, however, it is not survival, but a particular form of survivalism that develops out of the bankruptcy of a chauvinist notion of masculine "honor," that is the subject of this film. But if it is easy to be with Wertmuller in this attack, it is harder to follow her into a valorization of existentialist individualism--"man in disorder," for it is hard to believe that that is what is needed today when we know that only collective action has any hope of success against the national and corporate beasts that roam our world. Indeed, the most notable absence in this film is the total lack of collective resistance, from the early genocidal scene in which the victims walk calmly, single-file, up to the firing line, to the final prison scene in which the prisoners kneel peacefully in formation as Pasqualino stands, head bowed, with the pistol still in his hand.

In SWEPT AWAY, the most objectionable feature is perhaps not that Rafaella seems to enjoy the prospect of rape just before Gennarino stops, or that she later grovels--for it is, after all, rather difficult to have sympathy with this spoiled, surly, ruling-class woman--but that there is no serious counter example, no strong woman with whom to identify. In SEVEN BEAUTIES, too, we are presented with only two unacceptables: suicidal protest and abject survivalism. The same is not true of SPECIAL SECTION, where the action begins, after all, with a collective, if adventurist, assassination, and where, in addition, one of the judges, at the end, rebels against his role and casts his votes for acquittal. Small consolations, perhaps, but at least we are given something positive to look at.

There could have been a scene like this in SEVEN BEAUTIES, had Wertmuller chosen to show it to us. For in the final scene in the prison camp, with the pistol in his hand, Pasqualino could have rebelled, too, could reasonably have been fed up enough to rebel, and the prisoners could have been shown rising up with him. It would have been, no doubt, suicide, but not as empty as Francesco's or the anarchist's (and it would have made their gestures less empty by completing them). The problem with Wertmuller's film as it stands is that, whatever its intentions, it leaves its audiences only with a sense of overwhelming despair. And this, it should be clear, is not politically productive.

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THEORY THEORY

BENJAMIN'S AGE OF MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION

--Richard Kazis

> Marx says that revolutions are the locomotives of world history. But the situation may be quite different. Perhaps revolutions are not the train ride, but the human race grabbing for the emergency brake.
>
> --Walter Benjamin,
> fragment from *The Arcades*

In recent years, there has been a surge of interest in the work of a little-known German literary and cultural critic, Walter Benjamin. Until 1968, none of his work had been published in English in book form; since then, three books and several articles have been translated.[1] Today, no discussion of the German intellectual scene between the world wars is complete without a mention of Benjamin, and no serious appraisal of Marxist aesthetic and cultural criticism ignores his work. His 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" has become a standard reference for any attempts to analyze and understand the interrelation of political, technological and artistic development under capitalism; his insights are especially useful for the political analysis of film.

Benjamin, like so many of his contemporaries in the German intellectual circles, grew up in an upper middle class, culturally assimilated Jewish family in Berlin. He was born in 1892; his father was a successful art dealer and antiquarian. Decided upon a university career, Benjamin was thwarted by two events. First, his doctoral study, *The Origin of German Tragedy*, was rejected as being incomprehensible. He lost his only other chance of academic accreditation when he made the mistake of attacking one of the preeminent members of the intellectual circle around Stefan George in an essay on Goethe. His own idiosyncratic and impolitic ways led to a situation where Benjamin was forced to write for a living, for he had no access to secure academic employment. Throughout his life, he was never able to make ends meet: he lived at home even during his short-lived marriage; he took a monthly stipend from his parents; later, he received support from Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer's Institute for Social Research.

In 1915, Benjamin met Gershom Scholem. It was the first of several deep and important personal and intellectual friendships Benjamin developed. In Scholem he found a brilliant student of Jewish mysticism, a rare example of "Judaism in living form."[2] Even after Scholem emigrated to Palestine, Benjamin kept up a correspondence and, for many years, considered joining his friend in Jerusalem.

In the 1920s, Benjamin developed relationships with both T. W. Adorno and Bertolt Brecht. His studies had led him to a confrontation with aesthetic theory. His own experience of intellectual proletarianization and his friendships with Adorno and, later, Brecht led him to a serious consideration of dialectical materialism as a critical method. He moved away from earlier mystical-religious formulations toward political analysis. In 1923, Benjamin's response to the crisis of postwar Germany was for the individual to "discipline himself (sic) until his suffering no longer opens onto the precipitous road of hate, rather onto the ascending path of prayer"; by 1928, when the "Travels Through German Inflation" (in which this sentence appears) was actually published, the wording had been changed and the last phrase read: "until his suffering no longer opens onto the precipitous road of grief, but instead onto the ascending path of revolt."[3]

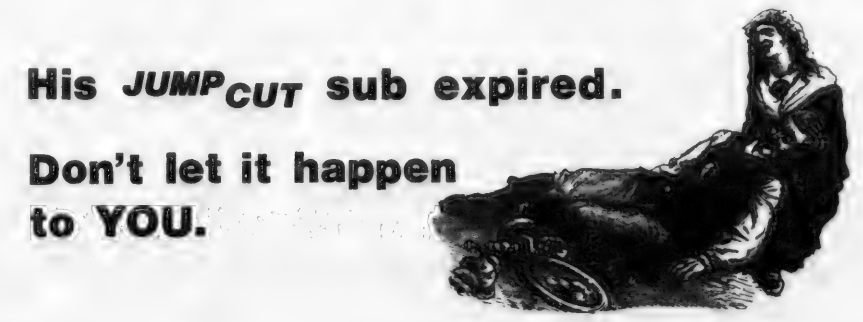
During the '20s, Benjamin's thought became more consistently informed by Marxism and revolution; in the '30s, his friendship with Brecht deepened, much to the disappointment of both Scholem and Adorno. His writings developed into practical exercises in materialist aesthetics. Though he never joined the Communist Party, it is clear that his messianic hope (which he never abandoned, ingrained as it was in his way of looking at the world) depended no longer upon the will of God but rather on the will of the proletariat.

The rise of fascism in Europe was the political backdrop to Benjamin's radicalization. The Nazi seizure of power in Germany also changed his life unalterably. He was forced to leave Germany and moved to Paris. After several years there, he was convinced by Adorno to emigrate to America. On September 26, 1940, when refused passage at the Franco-Spanish border, Benjamin, who was then on his way to Lisbon to board a ship for America, took his own life rather than fall into the hands of the Gestapo. Brecht, on hearing of his friend's death, commented that it was the first real loss that Hitler had caused to German literature.

Benjamin was an essayist: his insight came in short blasts. He planned to write a long work on 19th-century Paris but was never able to concentrate his efforts. He had an eye for the fragmentary, an almost gnostic appreciation of the secrets that can be gleaned from each small detail. Ernest Bloch, also a friend of Benjamin's, noted Benjamin's eye "for the marginal... for the impinging and unaccustomed, unschematic particularity which does not 'fit in' and therefore deserves a quite special and incisive attention."[4] His favorite exhibit at one museum was two grains of wheat upon which had been painstakingly inscribed the *Shema Yisroel*, the one-line affirmation of the Jew's faith in God, the essence of an entire religion on the tiniest of entities. It was the seemingly insignificant that, for Benjamin, was the most significant; each fragment of actual, demonstrable reality--physical and social reality--contained implicit in it the key to a much broader understanding. Benjamin's sensibility was akin to that of a photographer: his eye focused on the moment, on the wonder of appearance as it is now and shall never be again, on the uniqueness of the historical present.

This sensibility derived from Benjamin's early fascination with Jewish mysticism, and it informed his intellectual and critical method throughout his life, even after he turned to Marxism. Benjamin differed with Georg Lukács, one of Marxism's most important aesthetic critics, over the question of method. Lukács stressed the importance of the description of the totality of the societal process; he believed that only by a portrayal of the totality can art reflect class antagonisms and reveal the progressive tendencies of history. For Lukács, the novel was the art form of the modern era. Benjamin proceeded from a different point. He saw his investigations as a kind of drilling, of plumbing the depths. He once wrote, "I tell Brecht that penetrating into depth is my way of travelling to the antipodes."[5] If Lukács constructed his totality horizontally, Benjamin chose vertical coordinates. Benjamin felt that the task of the proletariat and the task of the revolutionary intellectual was "to make the continuum of history explode." The intellectual--the historical materialist--should reveal the significance of the present historical instant, should analyze the explosive convergence of past and future in the presence of the now so that it can be transformed.

It should not be construed that Benjamin's method was a static one: the historical materialist method, as he saw it, specifically involved an understanding and analysis of the dialectical tension of past and future in the present. To plumb the depths meant for Benjamin to explore dynamic interrelations; to focus on fragments meant to relate those fragments to the broader social reality. Benjamin understood that the social fabric is a complex weave, that "the rigid, isolated object (work, novel, book) is of no use whatsoever. It must be inserted into the context of living social relations."[6] For Benjamin, not only must art be evaluated in terms of its depiction of the social reality of class antagonisms (as Lukács suggested): art must also be analyzed in terms of its technique, in terms of its position within the literary production relations of a given era. Benjamin admired his friend Brecht's demand that intellectuals "not supply the production apparatus without, within the limits of the possible, changing that apparatus in the direction of socialism." The form of art had to be changed as well as the content. Benjamin saw that it is not enough, for example, simply to make people aware of human misery: photography can



"make human misery an object of consumption" and can even turn "the struggle against misery into an object of consumption" (p. 96). Art must not stand above and outside the context of living social relations, an almost sacred trust as envisioned by Lukács. Benjamin wanted to see the barriers of competence, the distinctions between artist and audience, broken down. He wanted to see new form and new conceptualizations of the role of art and artist. "What we must demand from the photographer is the ability to put such a caption beneath his picture as will rescue it from the ravages of modishness and confer upon it a revolutionary use value" (p. 95).

Benjamin was intensely aware of the cultural crisis of interwar Germany that accompanied the rise of fascism. He saw how literature too was undergoing a profound crisis. In 1934, in an address delivered to the Institute for the Study of Fascism in Paris, Benjamin declared, "We are in the midst of a vast process in which literary forms are being melted down, a process in which many of the contrasts in terms of which we have been accustomed to think may lose their meaning" (p. 89). The implication of these changes for Benjamin was that artists could no longer afford to stand above the social struggle and look down: artists had to choose sides. Benjamin saw that art was not innocent, that every artist living in those years had to choose between the fascist aestheticization of politics and the communist politicization of art. The Italian Futurists were able to avoid political realities by understanding war as an aesthetic phenomenon, as a new architecture, as a symphony--as anything but the horror and the political event it is. In reaction to the growing support of fascism by artists like the Futurists, Benjamin developed his own contribution to the theory of art. In the preface to his 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin writes that the concepts he introduces in that essay "differ from the more familiar terms in that they are completely useless for the purposes of Fascism. They are, on the other hand, useful for the formulation of revolutionary demands in the politics of art."[7]

In the body of the essay, Benjamin explores the interrelationship of art and the history of technological development under capitalism; he deals specifically with film as the art form for modern times. Film fascinated Benjamin in the same way that newspapers and photography did. They are all forms of mass communications made possible by the advent of mechanical reproduction, of technologies that allow the reproduction of a word, a picture or a scene so that it becomes accessible to a wide audience. The mode of artistic production and communication in a given era is determined in large part by the level of technological development at the time. At the same time, the mode of production and communication plays a large role in determining the relation between the working class and bourgeois society. Benjamin, in this essay, outlines the modern development in this way. The introduction of the technology of lithography, which enabled many copies to be printed from the same master plate, increased the potential of the lithograph to reach a mass audience. Once lithography had been perfected, the illustrated newspaper was the logical next step. The development of photography by the late 1800s further accelerated the speed of production, and it was only a matter of time and technology before film, the next step in the progression toward more exact representation in mass communications, evolved to its maturity.

What are the effects and significance of these new art forms? Benjamin understood and lauded the potential democratization of the communications media and the arts implicit in advances in mechanical reproduction. A work of art that once could only be seen by the wealthy in a museum or gallery could be reproduced at little cost and made accessible to many more people. The advent of inexpensive illustrated newspapers meant that current events had become the business of the masses. Film allows an event or a performance to be recorded and be available for countless audiences to see. Mechanical reproduction makes possible the involvement of the masses in culture and politics; it makes possible mass culture and mass politics.

In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin analyzes how mechanical reproduction destroys the uniqueness and authenticity, the "aura" as he labelled it, of the work of art. The withering of aura in the age of mechanical reproduction is inevitable. And, in many respects, it is a good thing: if the mystique of the "original" is broken down, if the work of art is torn from the "fabric of tradition" (p. 211) of which it was a part, then it loses its false importance. "For the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual" (p. 224). The value of the work of art no longer stems from its ritualistic cult value, whether it be a magical cult, religious cult or secularized cult like the cult of beauty. Authenticity is no longer a relevant criterion for evaluating artistic production. In photography, for example, it makes no sense to ask for the "authentic" print.

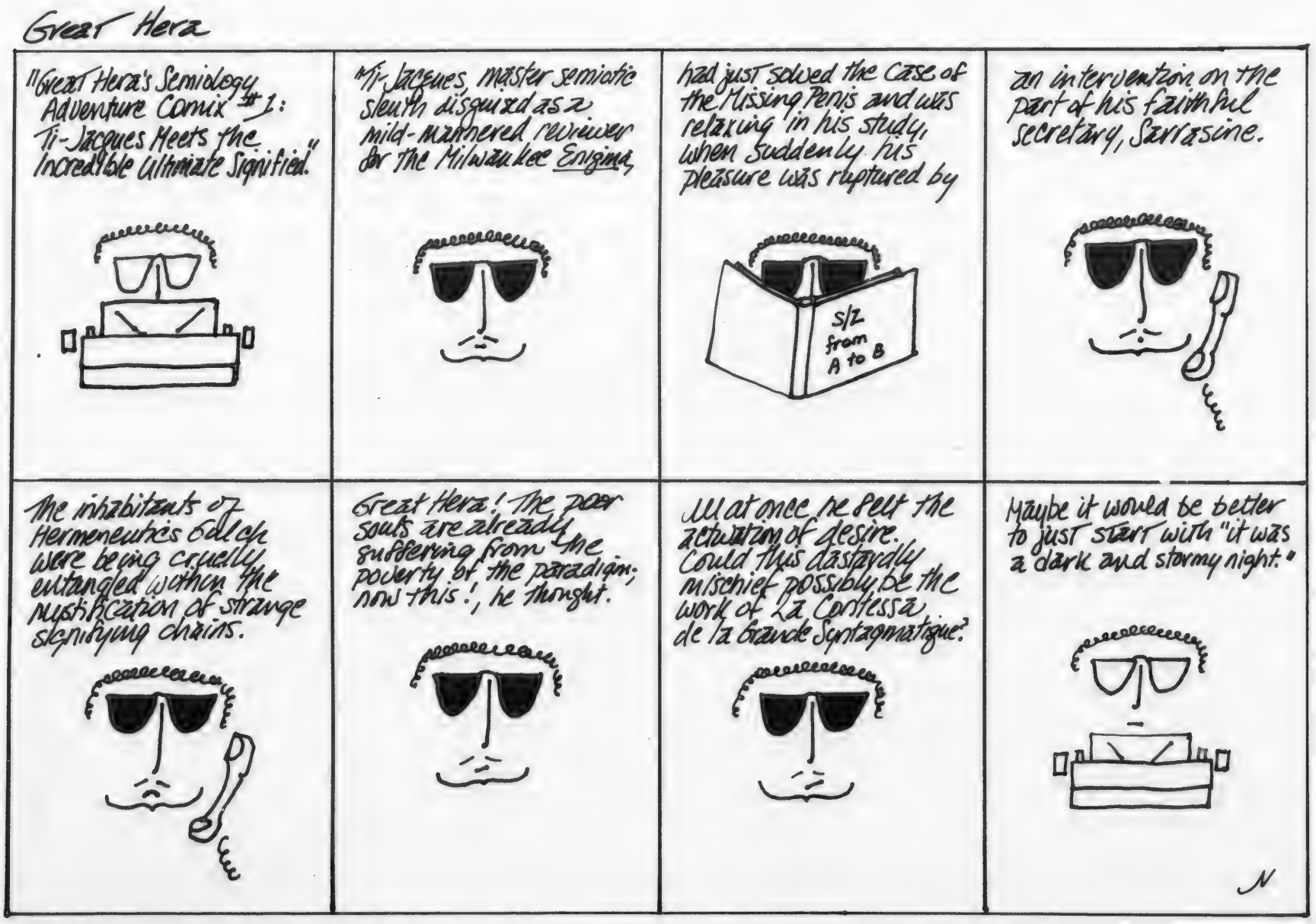
The effect of this withering of the aura is significant: "instead of being based on ritual," Benjamin notes, the function of art "begins to be based on another practice--politics" (p. 224). What this means is that art for art's sake, the theologizing of art, is rejected for artistic production that serves a purpose, that stands in direct relation to the political struggles of the time. Art and media begin to merge. When the distance (we could call it the mystification, though Benjamin does not use that word) between artist and society is lessened (and this is what accompanies the loss of aura), then the false distinctions between the social roles of artists and educators are negated. Benjamin explains, "By the absolute emphasis on its exhibition value as opposed to an ahistorical cult value , the work of art becomes a creation with entirely new functions, among which the one we are conscious of, the artistic function, later may be recognized as incidental." And he adds: "This much is certain: today, photography and the film are the most serviceable exemplifications of this new function" (p. 225).

For Benjamin, the withering of the aura is the result of two developments unique to films: the new relationship between actor and audience and the mass nature of the medium. In the theater, the actor responds to and adjusts to the audience. Each performance is different: there is a subtle interaction, a unique experience of relation between actor and audience. In film, there is no audience for the performance; there is only the camera. In fact, the actor's performance is not one performance but rather a series of performances. A film is an ordering of multiple fragments, a series of scenes shot in order of expedience rather than in logical or temporal order. The actor is put in the paradoxical situation of operating with his/her whole living person while being robbed of the aura that is tied to his/her presence. The actor is present to the camera, not to the audience; as a result, "the audience's identification with the actor is really an identification with the camera" (p. 228).

The importance of this, in Benjamin's opinion, is the distancing it forces on the audience: the filmgoer more easily takes on the role of critic, for there is no personal contact with the actor to influence judgments. The film viewer becomes a tester, almost a back-seat director. Benjamin even compares the film shot to a vocational aptitude test, describing both as examples of "segmental performances of the individual...taken before a committee of experts" (p. 246). This audience attitude is radically different from the audience attitude that appreciates the work of art for its cult value and that bows to the mystery and ritual power of the unique work. Benjamin states clearly, "This testing approach is not the approach to which cult values may be exposed" (p. 229). With the development of film, Benjamin argues, the audience no longer stands in awe of the work of art. The very nature of art is transformed, and it is transformed in a way that encourages--at least potentially--the removal of film from "the realm of the 'beautiful semblance' which, so far, had been taken to be the only sphere where art could thrive" (p. 230).

The actor's function is radically altered as well. The film can record reality, can document what is. This makes it possible for everyone to participate, as an actor, in the creation of the work of art. In many early Russian films, the people were themselves and they were collectively the "star" of the film. Benjamin explains that some of these players "are not actors in our sense but people who portray *themselves*--and primarily in their own work process" (p. 232). The distinctions that normally are considered important in art are blurred and even exploded by means of mechanical reproduction on film. The actor/audience distinction, the art/communications media distinction, the artist/public distinction--all are broken down. For Benjamin, the most revolutionary contribution of film is "the promotion of a revolutionary criticism of traditional concepts of art" (p. 231).

Even the art/science distinction no longer holds. Benjamin writes, "Of a screened behavior item which is neatly brought out in a certain situation, like the muscle of a body, it is difficult to say what is more fascinating, its artistic value or its value for science" (p. 236). Film can open up


Great Hera
"Great Hera's Semiology Adventure Comix #1: Ti-Jacques Meets the Incredible Ultimate Signified."
Ti-Jacques, master semiotic sleuth disguised as a mild-mannered reviewer for the Milwaukee Enigma,
had just solved the case of the Missing Penis and was relaxing in his study, when suddenly his pleasure was ruptured by
S/Z from A to B
an intervention on the part of his faithful secretary, Sarrasine.
The inhabitants of Hermeneutics Gulch were being cruelly entangled within the mystification of strange signifying chains.
Great Hera! The poor souls are already suffering from the poverty of the paradigm; now this!, he thought.
All at once he felt the activation of desire. Could this dastardly mischief possibly be the work of La Contessa de la Grande Syntagmatique?
Maybe it would be better to just start with "it was a dark and stormy night."
N

our own world for us, capture the significance of the insignificant moment, and consciously explore a space. Film has "burst this prison world asunder by the dynamite of a tenth of a second" (p. 236). Film has a potentially revolutionary use value in that it enables us to explore and understand our world and our historical situation: "the film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives; on the other hand it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action" (p. 236).

When we all become actors, when the passivity of the awed art viewer is given up, then the potential for self-motivated creative and political activity increases. Film and other forms of mechanical reproduction further the possibility of such radical changes of mindset by the way they change the reaction of the masses toward art. Unlike paintings and sculptures, which are placed in museums for the contemplation of the few, film presents an object for simultaneous collective experience. Everyone is an expert: enjoyment and criticism are intimately fused. The masses, just as when illustrated newspapers were introduced, have the potential to know, and that leads inevitably to the potential to act.

The reader should not assume that Benjamin was pollyanna-ish about the future, that he saw the process of revolutionary mass culture as inevitable simply because of the nature of the film audience. On the contrary. Benjamin was all too painfully aware that film was not being used in a revolutionary way under capitalism and that the potential inherent in the medium might never be fully utilized. Throughout this article, Benjamin notes how false consciousness is maintained. Reactionary critics continue to read cult values and ritual elements into film in their efforts to class the film among the "arts." Benjamin mentions Franz Werfel, who once stated that film would be a great art form if only it didn't have to copy the exterior world. The very dominance of the cinema by capital (in Benjamin's day as well as in our own era of communications conglomerates) hides and subverts the revolutionary use value of film. The artist is made into a cult figure: a new ritual is created and sustained. The masses are influenced to reestablish and maintain the false distinctions between actor and audience, between artist and public. A false aura is created, an artificial build-up of the "personality."[8] For Benjamin, "the spell of the personality" is "the phony spell of the commodity." The nature of film production under capitalism attempts to mystify the audience further. In contrast to the early Russian tendency to have the masses as the "star" of films, "capitalistic exploitation of the film denies consideration to man's legitimate claim on being reproduced" (p. 232). Instead of allowing the masses to participate--to act in and upon their own historical situation--the system of film production and distribution under capitalism forces the masses back into the passive role of spectator. Benjamin saw the film industry "trying hard to spur the interest of the masses through illusion-promoting spectacles and dubious speculations" (p. 233), to spur the interest of the masses toward illusion while denying them access to participation in those spectacles that would reflect their true interests.

Benjamin finishes the essay with an analysis of the way in which fascism uses the film medium for its own purposes and the ways in which the film medium lends itself to such use. Benjamin argues that under capitalism, the mechanical reproduction of reality onto film not only is *not* progressive, but it is dangerous. This is due, in part, to the very nature of film. Before the painting, Benjamin notes, "the spectator can abandon himself to his associations. Before the movie frame he cannot do so. No sooner has his eye grasped a scene than it is already changed" (p. 238). The film draws the viewer along. As Duhamel is quoted, "I can no longer think what I want to think. My thoughts have been replaced by moving images" (p. 238). For this reason, the propaganda value of film is great, greater than that of a painting or another more static art form that invites the spectator to contemplation. The Nazis knew this well: Leni Riefenstahl's films are cases in point. The films are awesome, inspiring, even "artful," yet they try to sweep the spectator along in a mystified passion for the cult of Fuhrer and Fatherland.

The film is the art and communications medium for modern times, Benjamin claims. He writes in a footnote, "The film is the art form that is in keeping with the increased threat to his life which modern man (sic) has to face" (p. 250). Further, film is the only medium which can reproduce the masses and bring them face to face with themselves. "Mass movements are usually discernible more clearly by a camera than by the naked eye.... The image received by the eye cannot be enlarged the way a negative is enlarged. This means that mass movements, including war, constitute a form of human behavior which particularly favors mechancial equipment" (p. 251). The struggle for the allegiance of the masses, the central political struggle of our times, cannot help but revolve around the use and abuse of the film medium.

Culture, communications, art--they constitute a single battleground where, Benjamin argues, fascism and communism have no choice--given the increasing formation of masses, the historical development of capitalism in the 1930s and the technological development of art to that time--but to fight. Fascism introduces aesthetics into political life as a way of giving the masses "a chance to express themselves" instead of a chance to claim their "right to change property relations" (p. 241). Communism responds by politicizing art, by demystifying the production, the distribution, the form and the content of art in an attempt to make art serve the cause of the masses and not vice versa.

I explained earlier in this article that Benjamin's view of history was that of a pessimist, a person whose messianic hopes depended upon a miraculous, cataclysmic revolt of the masses. In his historical analysis, he consciously attempted to be a Marxist: he tried, as he himself acknowledged, to develop an historical materialist critique of art and culture (see "Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian," *New German Critique*, No. 5, Spring 1975, for an example). In his world view and his conception of human history, though, Benjamin differed significantly from Marx. Marx, a product of Enlightenment optimism, saw history as a progression, an inevitable passage through historical epochs leading to the triumph of justice and humanity in the triumph of the proletariat. Benjamin, living in a very different era, was less convinced. With less faith in rationality and a more developed understanding--and fear--of the nature and possible uses of art and the communications media, Benjamin always feared the worst. He, too, yearned for the ascendance of the proletariat and, in his own way, worked toward that goal, but ultimately his hope was a messianic hope for an end to history. Marx saw revolutions as the "locomotives" of history; Benjamin saw revolutions as the pulling of the "emergency brake," as the miraculous rescue of a world gone out of control. "The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception, but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight."[9] For Benjamin, material progress was *not* the godsend too many social democrats and Marxists believed it to be; for Benjamin, modern history has been the record of the overpowering of tradition by conformism. The only hope had to be, and for Benjamin it was, an anti-historical messianism.

Much of Benjamin's popularity today may in fact be attributable to his pessimism and lack of faith in the future. We, like Benjamin, sense ourselves as living in a time of crisis, and we see that crisis as permanent, as increasing in its complexity and potential danger until, somehow, it is finally resolved. Progress, growth, development--these words have all taken on negative value since the mid-60s. It becomes harder and harder to retain Marx's positiveness and optimism, and it becomes easier to understand the world view and belief system of one who, like us all, was witness to the destruction and violence of fascism. With his affinity for Kafka and Karl Kraus,[10] for the lost souls and the street life, Benjamin seems closer to the temperament and outlook of many who experienced the cultural revolution of the '60s than does the patrician Lukács or the strident Marx. Even Benjamin's essay style, his fragmentary observations and writings, makes him seem more modern. System building, as in the work of Marx or Freud or Einstein, is a thing of the past: the glut of information in modern society makes the quick, the fragmentary, the sharp insight far more accessible than the tome or the well-constructed totality.

This propensity for detail, for the "signposts" (*Illuminations*, p. 226) and "cultural wealth" of contemporary society, have also made Benjamin popular with those interested in semiology, the study of signs. The French editor of a collection of Benjamin's essays proclaimed him "the least known precursor of semiology."[11] Whether the relation was linear or not, there are many shared concerns between Benjamin and semiologists. To "read" the values of a society through its artistic production, to drill through an item in order to place it in its larger societal context, to work almost as an archeologist would--Benjamin's method in his unfinished study of 19th century Paris is very similar to the style and goal of a writer like Roland Barthes in the short pieces collected in *Mythologies*. Barthes writes, "In a single day, how many really non-signifying fields do we cross? Very few, sometimes none. Here I am before the sea; it is true that it bears no message. But on the beach, what material for semiology! Flags, slogans, signals, sign-boards, clothes, suntan even, which are so many messages to me" (p. 112).

Benjamin studied these "ideas-in-form," these "signifying fields"; they were the details that, properly understood, properly placed in context, revealed great insights into the dominant ideology and its development. Benjamin looked at the architecture and street plan of Paris, at gambling, at photography; he tied their development to a broad analysis of the "era of high capitalism." Parallel quotations from both Barthes and Benjamin reveal their affinity. Benjamin writes, "Historicism rightly culminates in universal history.... Materialist historiography, on the other hand, is based on a constructive principle. Thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well" (*Illuminations*, p. 262). Barthes notes, "by treating 'collective presentations' as sign-systems, one might hope to... account in *detail* for the mystification which transforms petit-bourgeois culture into a universal nature" (*Mythologies*, p. 9).

Benjamin's popularity is on the rise, and many who have never heard of him by name are aware of the arguments he advanced. Current trends in both political and avant-garde cinema reflect concerns similar to those of Benjamin's. The desire to unite the scientific and the artistic can be seen in many cinema verite pieces; the desire to give the people access to and representation in their own spectacles is evident in mcuh videotape work and in films like BLOW FOR BLOW and THE AMAZING EQUAL PAY SHOW; concern with "signposts" and "cultural wealth" have informed the work of Godard (as in TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HER) and others after him; recent Cuban cinema, like THE OTHER FRANCISCO, has tried to analyze and expose the nature of bourgeois filmmaking and storytelling in an effort to defuse the counterrevolutionary propagandistic power of American and other bourgeois films. Other parallels suggest themselves. Whether Banjamin was a model for any of these developments is unclear: what is clear is that he analyzed a mode of film production that still exists today, except in an even more highly developed form than it did in the late 1930s, and that he understood both its dangers, its potential and the critical necessity for it to be used in the cause of socialism. It is remarkable that 40 years ago, only eight years after the first talkie, a German cultural critic interested primarily in literature could have been so perceptive about the nature of the film medium under capitalism that the implications of his ideas are only now being investigated fully.

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[1]Benjamin's work in translation includes: *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken Books, 1969; *Understanding Brecht*. London: New Left Books, 1973; *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Age of High Capitalism*. New Left Books, 1973; "Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian," *New German Critique*, #5, Spring 1975. pp. 27-58. All page numbers in this paper refer to the essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in the Schocken edition of *Illuminations*.

Articles on Benjamin that I have found useful include the following:

T.W. Adorno, "Correspondence with Benjamin," *New Left Review*, 81 (Sept./Oct. 1973).

— — —, "A Portrait of Walter Benjamin," *Prisms*, London: New Left Books, 1967, pp. 227-241.

H.W. Belmore, "A New Study of Walter Benjamin," *German Life and Letters*, July 1968. pp. 345-350.

"Walter Benjamin: Towards a Philosophy of Language," *Times Literary Supplement*, August 22, 1968.

Fredric Jameson, "Walter Benjamin, or Nostalgia," in Robert Boyers (ed.), *The Legacy of the German Refugee Intellectuals*, New York: Schocken Books, 1972. pp. 52-68.

Gershom Scholem, "Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture," *Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute*, 1905.

S.M. Weber, "Walter Benjamin: Commodity Fetishism, the Modern and the Experience of History," in Dick Howard and Karl Klare (eds.), *The Unknown Dimension: European Marxism since Lenin*, New York: Basic Books, 1972.

Bernd Witte, "Benjamin and Lukács: Historical Notes on their Political and Aesthetic Theories," *New German Critique*, #5, Spring 1975. pp. 3-26.

[2]*Illuminations*, p. 35.

[3]Bernd Witte, "Benjamin and Lukács: Historical Notes on their Political and Aesthetic Theories," *New German Critique*, #5, Spring 1975, p. 9.

[4]As quoted by Stanley Mitchell in the introduction to *Understanding Brecht*.

[5]*Understanding Brecht*, p. 110.

[6]"The Artist as Producer," *Understanding Brecht*, p. 87.

[7]"The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, p. 218.

[8]Often, the cult of the actor is given up for an even more mystified aura that champions object over subject--the cult of technology itself. Benjamin notes, "If the actor thus becomes a stage property, this latter, on the other hand, frequently functions as actor" (*Illuminations*, p. 246).

[9]"Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations*, p. 257.

[10]Karl Kraus (1874-1936), Austrian-Jewish journalist, poet and critic. Not yet translated, but a very influential member of the loose network of Jewish intellectuals which included Scholem, Benjamin, Bloch, Kafka. Benjamin wrote an essay on Kraus.

[11]*L'Homme, le langage et la culture*. Paris: De Noel, 1971.

IN PRINT IN PRINT IN PRINT

Filmmaking Books

--Joe Heumann

Lenny Lipton, *The Super 8 Book*
(San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1975). $6.95.
Lenny Lipton, *Independent Film Making*
(San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1972). $5.95.
Russell Campbell, *Photographic Theory*
(New York: A. S. Barnes). $2.95.

Super 8 equipment is still regarded as a threatening toy to many pros. Only when a Panavision camera arrives in eight huge, separate boxes do they feel comfortable. This was the idea I got after talking to a number of professional filmmakers in Chicago about using S-8 in the classroom. One of them told me to bail out of S-8. If I had $4,000 to buy a complete sync-sound production system, I would be wiser to spend the money on a video mixer and stay within the context of videotape to teach cinema techniques. Videotape, however, is not film, and though some cinematic techniques can be taught through its use, the basic editing process (frame-to-frame relationships) and the minimal production process experience are lost. There also are hidden costs, especially the price of tape as opposed to film.

A $4,000 investment would enable a film production class to purchase the following equipment:

- two high-quality XL sound-on-film cameras
- a double-band projection system (two projectors run in sync, for sound transfers and editing work)
- an editing table complete with viewer, gang synchronizer, splicer, take-up reels and sound amplifier
- tripods
- reflector lamps that can use tungsten bulbs or floods.

This is everything needed to produce sync-sound film for a class of 12 to 16 students. In comparison, a new Nagra IV tape recorder costs $4,000, without the microphone. A 16mm system that would permit production as sophisticated as the S-8 system would cost at least $10,000, used. All materials at the level of 16mm are more expensive, too. (A fast rule of thumb is to calculate that 16mm is four times as expensive as S-8.)

Such film production, at a minimum expense and with a maximum of thoroughness, is essential for students of cinema, not because it gives them a chance to break into the "bigtime" but because it demystifies the primary system that creates film products. Until the production process is laid out, adequately described and analyzed, students are forced to keep a respectful distance.

It is also important for teachers and students to realize that S-8 is becoming the medium for many television stations because of its cost and quality. In tandem with the mini-camera video systems, S-8 is replacing 16mm equipment while offering dependable and durable service.

The books I use in my S-8 course are Lenny Lipton's *Super 8 Book* and *Independent Film Making*, along with Russell Campbell's *Photographic Theory for the Motion Picture Cameraman*. I stay away from classroom assignment of such valuable works as Eisenstein or Reisz because I want my students to decide gradually what formal strategies they will develop. Initially, they should understand the production process and the technology that makes it possible. There is no way to ensure that when a student sends a film cartridge to the drugstore for bulk processing, the film will be developed properly. But h/she should know how poor exposure can be differentiated from a bad processing job. The Lipton and Campbell books are needed to develop such rudimentary skills.

I use *Independent Film Making* as a comprehensive work that introduces students to most technical aspects of 16mm and to extensive production techniques, including how to produce high-quality professional work at low prices. The philosophy of the book fits well into an S-8 course, for it declares that price no longer determines a filmmaker's parameters. Knowledge that filmmaking is similar no matter what format used is necessary to break down the fear of trying to solve problems with ingenuity and to break down the desire for fancy equipment. *Independent Film Making* is a lead-in to Campbell's rigorous work, which specifically concentrates on the photographic process itself. This book enables the student to understand the complexity of the lab process and also shows how logical it all is. Campbell covers film stock, processing, sensitometry, image formation and tone rendering, grain structure and definition, and printing. Most important for my class are his four chapters covering the color photography process. Since most students shoot in color, this section helps them understand the basics of the subtractive process, color balance, color temperature and the printing of color film stocks. Confidence in these technical areas enables students who go to labs for custom service to talk with workers there so that their films are produced in the way they want.

The Super 8 Book is valuable as a primary text but also is a breakthrough in the area of teaching because of its accessibility to students of the junior high level and above. Lipton's informal approach does not hinder a systematic study of the S-8 medium. He is able to trace the growth of the format in historical and technical terms while also describing in practical terms what is available to filmmakers. Pictures, diagrams and tables are well thought out, profuse and detailed. In the camera chapter, for example, Lipton covers design aspects, camera construction and lens construction and provides the technical diagrams and equations that enable students to calculate things such as exposure time (necessary for the XL cameras with variable shutters). Depth of field tables are included likewise, and there is comprehensive coverage of what's right and wrong about cameras as inexpensive as Kodak Supermatic and as expensive as a Beaulieu 4008MZII. Sound, processing, editing and projection are all discussed exhaustively, and the last chapter, called "Products and Services," provides information on all the major supply and processing houses that deal with S-8 in the U.S. Pertinent technical journals are cited, too.

Lipton's philosophy, that technical competency can help free students to become independent workers, is continually reinforced, and he is careful to show how theory and practice are a constant, intertwined process. Lipton believes that inexpensive methods for individual film production enable a person to understand a process and not fall in awe of it. Students find that films can be made cheaply yet be refined at the same time. For those who dream of Panavisions in eight boxes, Lipton is an abberation, claiming the abilities and power of performance that only a capable technical elite can produce. Junior high school students can drop drugstore film into $250 XL sound-on-film cameras, powered by pen light batteries, and create an alternative film product. This is one of the strongest methods of making students aware of how the film process functions as an intelligible machine and of making them criticize it at its starting point, with a perception and logic developed by their own experience. Practice creates theory, and theory is instantly translated into practice. ■

ORDINARY LOVE

--Bill Horrigan

The Hollywood Professionals. Series edited by Peter Cowie. London: The Tantivy Press. New York: A.S. Barnes & Co.

Volume One: Michael Curtiz, Raoul Walsh, Henry Hathaway. Kingsley Canham. 1973. 200 pages, paper $2.95.

Volume Two: Henry King, Lewis Milestone, Sam Wood. Clive Denton (on King), Kingsley Canham (Milestone), Tony Thomas (Wood). 1974. 192 pages, paper $2.95.

Volume Three: Howard Hawks, Frank Borzage, Edgar G. Ulmer. John Belton. 1974. 182 pages, paper $2.95.

Volume Four: Tod Browning, Don Siegel. Stuart Rosenthal (on Browning), Judith Kass (Siegel). 1975. 207 pages, paper $2.95.

Volume Five: King Vidor, John Cromwell, Mervyn LeRoy. Clive Denton (on Vidor), Kingsley Canham. 1976. 192 pages, paper $3.50.

On the face of it, nothing could be more unexceptional or indeed more welcome than a series of monographs on some previously overlooked Hollywood careers. There is a market for such writings if only because they at least make available useful filmographies and at best can provide a succinct and methodical account of the dynamic structure of an individual director's work. *The Hollywood Professionals* (five volumes to date) contains generally accurate filmographies, and occasionally attention is called to some obscure but provocative-sounding film; so in these respects the series shows its value.

The problem is that it is *only* in these respects that any lasting value emerges. The individual monographs range from the unspeakably awful to the instructively deficient, and while the respective authors are the ones who must bear the responsibility for their failures, in the longer view those failures are in some measure traceable to the series' general editor/producer, Peter Cowie. It is Cowie who is explicitly endorsing this level of criticism, maintaining as he does a format that militates against the production of any rigorous and attentive work. A more conducive set-up would acknowledge the impossibility of sufficiently treating the extensive careers of three directors within the pages of a small paperback volume and would avoid the problem either by reducing the number of directors per volume or by increasing the total allotment of pages. If these alternatives are impractical (and anyway are reformist measures in circumstances demanding more), then a third option would be for Cowie simply to contract better writers--ones who would openly acknowledge the imposed limitations and construct their work accordingly. As it now stands, and given the evident sensibilities of most of the writers in Cowie's stable, the format only encourages their worst tendencies.

With the exception of John Belton's Vol. 3 (on Hawks, Borzage and Ulmer) and to a lesser extent Vol. 4 (on Browning and Siegel), the series tries to avoid trading in auteurist assumptions. The introduction to Vol. 1 notes this outright, and it is everywhere apparent in the other volumes that the directors are to be essentially typified in terms such as, for instance, "an accomplished technician" (Hathaway), "a hard, fast and efficient worker" (Curtiz), or "a master craftsman" (Walsh), and so on in comparable terms. Instead of arranging the director's films in what might result in a productively relational perspective, the authors proceed by sketching in a few career/biographical specifics and, at the proper chronological junctures, stopping to remark on one especially "interesting" film before continuing on to the next. By paying attention, however cursorily, to the range of the directors' careers, the authors apparently think they are playing fair by the series title, i.e., that they are giving priority to the task of clarifying what it meant to be a pro in the Hollywood system.

Now it is clear that not every director is an auteur, but this has no absolute connection with the site--in this case, Hollywood--of the director's practice. While it may be more of a challenge for a director to exert the force of his/her "preoccupations" in Hollywood, it would be difficult to locate anyone, short of the likes of John Simon, who still today maintained this to be an a priori impossibility. Yet the authors of these volumes--particularly Vols. 1, 2 and 5--come close to this position, a circumstance additionally peculiar in that they have chosen to write on these directors rather than others, meaning presumably that these directors are now "readable," that they bear an identity, that they aren't only interesting as and reducible to a symptom of the system in which they worked.

Curtiz' enormous output is held as a liability in his being regarded as an auteur ("...no consistent development of ideas or themes, nor are there any specific identifiable trademarks or signatures of style common to him"--Vol. 1, p. 13), but even assuming this to be so, Curtiz could very likely have been situated as an exemplary contract director in a specific studio operation over a specific historical range, with such a reading taking into account his work in its intertextual relation to, at least, the rest of Warner Bros.' products. But the monograph fails to pursue any such provisional line with any rigor, and in fact could not do so if it wanted, because such rigor would divert the author's energy from what, essentially, he *loves*--in this case, not only a love of the director (although it developes into this when the primary love-object, the individual films, are lost sight of) nor even a love of the full body of the director's work (no anarchic MacMahonism here) but simply a love of *some* films that happened to be directed by the same person.

Otherwise expressed, these volumes have been written not by an imagined average viewer but by the average viewer's fanatical extension: by the fan--the fan of that film experienced as being "ordinary," that film placed

according to Christian Metz in

> the Western, Aristotelean tradition of the fictional and representational arts, of *diegesis* and *mimesis*, for which its spectators were prepared--prepared in spirit, but also instinctually--by their experience of the novel, of theatre, of figurative painting; and which was thus the most profitable tradition for the cinema industry. Most films today still belong to the fictional formula... ("The Imaginary Signifier," *Screen*, Summer 1975, pp. 43-44)

The fan's preferred mode of speaking is simply to give voice to his/her opinions without feeling the need to make explicit the orientation of which the opinions are the inevitable extensions; and this orientation is not made explicit because it is presumed to be common to everyone, to be "what everyone knows." The ordinary film thus attains value to the degree that the spectator's emotions are stirred, that s/he finds character motivation believable, that the film's story is efficiently constructed (meaning that it constructs itself efficiently). Almost entirely, the weight is placed on the affective dimension of the text, and, the fan having turned it all back on his/her self, it remains there inaccessible to any critique that might diminish its right to demand his/her love (see, for example, Clive Denton on King Vidor: "But I am still somewhat bothered by Major Rogers, who, beneath Tracy's charm, is something of a bastard."--Vol. 5, p. 20). Though some of these volumes are exceptionally debased examples, they are instrumental in the construction of what Metz calls the cinema's

> third machine: after the one that manufactures the films, and one that consumes them, the one that *vaunts* them, that valorises the product...it extends the object, it idealizes it instead of turning back on it, it makes explicit the film's inaudible murmuring to us of "Love me": a mirror reduplication of the film's own ideological inspiration, already based on the mirror identification with the camera (or secondarily with the characters, if any). ("The Imaginary Signifier," p. 25)

The separate monographs most clearly exemplifying this tendency are by Clive Denton on Henry King and King Vidor and are written in a prose style a notch or two above that found in an adolescent's secret diary. On King, for example: "My own fondness for CAROUSEL must allow considerable credit to the original stage show and to Ferenc Molnar for providing in his play "Liliom" the basis for a warm and touching fantasy which, in contrast to some people, I do *not* find excessively sentimental or sticky" (Vol. 2, p. 45). Denton's work on King especially draws the little coherence it attains from his tendency to dwell on what King's films have meant to him, how they have interacted in his own psychological formation and career, such as it is. Thus there is this, opening the volume: "One afternoon in August 1951, my adolescent footsteps led me into the local cinema of my boyhood..." (Vol. 2, p. 7). At least two points must be made here. First, there is Denton's basic incompetence in tracing King's career (and Vidor's, for that matter) from a factual standpoint, which shouldn't be an unreasonable expectation to place, especially if no clear alternative is presented, such as the one Belton offers in his volume. The second point has to do with value judgments. There are certainly arguments to be made on their behalf--that they alert the reader to the critical and political biases of the writer, for example--but a value judgment is distinct from the unself-critical subjectivism that Denton displays in clinical dimensions. His "values" are not traceable to any coherent system, unlike, say, those of Robin Wood, which do form a system and are internally consistent.

Kingsley Canham, who wrote the work on LeRoy, Cromwell, Milestone, Curtiz, Walsh, and Hathaway, happily avoids those autobiographical impulses with which Denton's work is riddled, and he does attempt to keep in view both the production context--particularly that of the studio--and the chronological interrelation of the films. Yet for the most part he aspires to comprehend the films by means no more ambitious than retelling their narrative, intermittently adding a paraphrase of some especially "successful" stylistic figure. Ungrounded assertions are made to explain the dismissal of entire series of films, while an uncritical adoption of received ideas justifies the rehashing of the director's most famous films. The treatment of Curtiz once again is instructive here. In his American career alone, he made about 110 films, yet nearly half of the 44 pages of text are given over to four films (MILDRED PIERCE, YANKEE DOODLE DANDY, CASABLANCA, and SANTA FE TRAIL) while his final 29 films are virtually written off. An output as vast as Curtiz's is not, admittedly, easily accommodated in monograph format, but this hardly justifies the reduction of his career to a nucleus of films that are already the ones by which he has always been known. Rather than effecting a re-evaluation, the volume blandly repeats what everyone knows. Curtiz's volume especially, but to a lesser extent the volumes on the other directors as well, tries to bring about a compromise between writing an individual's history and analyzing an individual's work, but the exigencies of the format do not allow having it both ways or at least having it successfully both ways. The authors are forced to deal with an enclosed succession of facts/films comprising the director's practice, yet the impulse initiating this writing--a love for some films coincidentally signed by the same person--brings the narrative to periodic stops in futile attempts to restate, to renew, that love.

John Belton's Vol. 3 on Hawks, Borzage, and Ulmer views its project in terms markedly different from those of the other four volumes; he notes at the outset, "More than anything else, this book is about visual style" (Vol. 3, p. 5). Instead of inserting facile paraphrases of his favorite works by the directors into a career summary, Belton proceeds by giving a very brief orientation to the director's situation (i.e., his critical reputation) and follows this with explications of the purposefully delimited number of films chosen from across the full range of the director's activity. He does attempt to specify thematic progression and consistency, but this attempt is pursued at the price of specifying the production context, Belton seeing these directors instead as solitary artists creating masterpieces in their own private ateliers. This kind of retrograde auteurism is aggravated by the use of notoriously vague terminology, most evident in the remarks on Borzage, whose work Belton sees as embodying versions of "spirituality" and the "transcendent." He also refers Borzage's films to a "melodramatic form" of which he assumes the reader has a clear conception. To be sure, various poetics of melodrama have been formalized, primarily from the standpoint of 18th-19th century theatrical practice, but the critical use of the term in relation to the cinema remains massively problematic. At one point Belton characterizes melodrama as a "genre" and later cites Dickens, Ibsen, and Chekhov as exemplars of melodramatic literature, which makes one wonder what *generic* compatibilities in a strict sense obtain between Chekhov, Dickens, and eventually Borzage. Clearly one could perform a normalizing operation to bring three such disparate figures into the same class, but once having done so, it's likely one would have only the least interesting things to say about any one of them individually.

But Belton's volume still deserves a higher mark than the others, if only for refusing to indulge in dismissive evaluations of the directors' films. He wants at least to look at the films in some detail, and in comparison to the rest of the series, that represents a very noble aspiration. He understands, furthermore, that an auteurist study need not avail itself at every instant of the director's entire body of work in order to make some valid soundings and that such a study must avoid conflating the structures conjoining the films with the director's real or imagined intentions. This distinction--between structure and intention--has been a standard one since at least 1972 (when it was strongly reiterated in the conclusion to Peter Wollen's *Signs and Meanings in the Cinema*) and as such would not need to be repeated here, were it not for the fact that of the two other monographs, aside from Belton's, that explicitly want to perform auteurist readings--Judith Kass on Siegel and Stuart Rosenthal on Browning, both in Vol. 4--Kass' does so by consistently using Siegel's films as unmediated evidence of the director's personal preoccupations. By far the longest and most detailed monograph in the series, the Kass study occasionally includes observations on filmic specificity (as does Belton's, though they both place faith in certain stylistic devices as bearing an a priori coding) but she habitually indulges in what could be called heretical or ecstatic auteurism, of which the following would be a representative utterance: "Don Siegel's films reflect his rage at feeling powerless to deal with the real world--the universe beyond film-making. His movies are an exorcism of personal furies." (Vol. 4, p. 68). Whatever else this is, it is not the language of criticism, though it might be at home in the partisan arena of film reviewing. Inadvertently or not, Kass seems to find Siegel's career instructive for the proof it gives that even psychopaths can make it big in Hollywood. Some surprise.

Considering all five volumes together, it's arguable which tendency leads quicker to the inevitable dead-end: loving the director in the guise of what the films induce us to imagine or believe him to be; or loving *some* films, which love becomes institutionalized with the happy discovery of their having a common director. Posing the question in these terms is not meant to suggest a disavowal of the affective dimension of the text should be forced, which in any case would be an impossible ideal, but rather to make a fundamentally different point. It has to do with the typical level of achievement attained in this series (typical here referring to the majority of the work, placed between Denton's virtually worthless entries and Belton's more provocative readings), and it would ask, simply, why these volumes are not better than they are.

Given that the space Cowie permits for these monographs is hardly amenable to the comprehension of a long Hollywood career, is it still too much to ask that whatever attempt *is* made be done with rigor? In these volumes nothing is problematic, no real contradictions are acknowledged. The Hollywood in which these professionals worked corresponds to a particular signifying practice--evident in a specifically determined system of organizing graphic space, for example, or in a certain rapport maintained between spectator and spectacle by means of various cutting procedures--but these arguments are left altogether unexamined. Visual analyses are given marginal priority, and in those rare instances where the specifically filmic is noted, it is invariably with the understanding that it is functional in the service of a novelistic conception of realism that by never being questioned is implicitly identified with the cinema's real vocation.

Such deficiencies are not, of course, peculiar to these volumes; yet they are exactly the ones that analyses of the "ordinary" films made by these Hollywood professionals must take into consideration. The manner in which this five-volume series speaks is not, again, absolutely univocal or is so only to the extent that Hollywood is nowhere recognized as offering what amount to standard usage models, and this ultimately serves both terms of the series' title badly. The potential value of the series ought to be considerable but there's no way it can be realized unless both terms of the title are given their due more than they've been thus far. If a group of individuals is going to be arranged under the rubric of "Hollywood professionals," then someone at least had better point out that Hollywood refers, among other places, to an ideological intersection and that "professionals" functioning there produce work bearing traces of that original location. It's more than a day's work for a film to professionally efface the marks of its own writing, and if any solitary and romantic-minded critic wants an object in which to channel love, then that estimable process might as well be it. ■

Revisionism Made Simple

--Thomas Waugh

> Richard Meran Barsam, ed. *Nonfiction Film Theory and Criticism* (N.Y.: Dutton, 1976). Paperback. $6.95, US. $8.95, Canada.

Documentary courses now are offered by most serious film studies departments, and in recent years there has been a predictable proliferation of books designed to serve as texts in this specialized area. *Nonfiction Film Theory and Criticism*, an anthology edited by Professor Richard Barsam of Richmond College, City University of New York, aims rather conspicuously at this textbook market.

Barsam has made several previous book attempts to anticipate the needs of teachers and students in the documentary field. His first volume, the historical survey *Nonfiction Film: a Critical History* (1973), was chiefly notable for having introduced the concept of "nonfiction film" as an apparent way of avoiding the theoretical muddle about genre definition that always has obscured documentary criticism. (In the twenties and thirties, for example, it was common for English language critics to treat Eisenstein and Dovzhenko as documentarists.) Yet the book proceeded to deal with its subject matter in quite conventional theoretical terms, without reflecting the radical shifting of boundaries which ought to have been implied by the term "nonfiction." (This present 1976 volume perpetuates this theoretical backwardness.)

More recently Barsam has published a *Filmguide to* TRIUMPH OF THE WILL and a number of glowing articles on Leni Riefenstahl, for which he has been soundly scolded in these pages as elsewhere (*JUMPCUT* 10/11). One of his articles, "Leni Riefenstahl: Artifice and Truth in a World Apart," is reprinted in his new anthology. His inclusion of two Riefenstahl sections in a volume allegedly centered on English language documentary is at best an eccentric indulgence.[1]

Barsam's new anthology confirms that his continuing uncritical and wrongheaded attitude toward his heroine is symptomatic of a far more fundamental error than indiscretion. The implication of his work on Riefenstahl is that politics and art are separate categories and only occasional and incidental bedfellows. This dubious ideological credo has now been extended, through Barsam's present capacity as editor, in his unquestioning endorsement of the traditional pantheon and literature of documentary history and in his emphasis on the aesthetic accomplishments of documentaries as the only real criterion of their worth.

In one of his section prefaces, he states,

> The best nonfiction film is a creative film, not a literal record of some happening or a straightforward piece of argument or a twisted piece of propaganda...as with all art, the question is one of degree: the degree of creativity....The best nonfiction films are best not because they are the most informative or the most persuasive or the most useful, but because they are the most creative, effective, and valuable human documents that can be made from the circumstances represented in them....

There is already a surfeit of this kind of mystification making the rounds without adding to it.

The twenty-six articles included in the volume are divided into four sections. "The Nonfiction Film Idea" is a collection of theoretical discussions of which most pertain to the Grierson generation of British documentary and were written at least a generation ago. The section called "The Nonfiction Film and History" explores a range of specific topics of documentary history from THE MARCH OF TIME to the USIA propaganda of the sixties. "The Nonfiction Film Artist" presents critical evaluations of Flaherty, Cavalcanti, Riefenstahl, Jennings, and Wiseman, plus interviews with Wiseman and Willard van Dyke. The last section, "Making a Nonfiction Film," contains personal accounts of filmmaking by van Dyke (again!), Riefenstahl (again!!), Joris Ivens, and Robert Gardner, the American ethnological documentarist.

No doubt it is significant that fully fifteen of the twenty-six entries are written by major "auteurs" of documentary history (primarily producers and directors, but an editor and a writer are represented as well). There are both advantages and disadvantages to this constellation. Documentary has been a film form usually motivated by an explicit social mission, and for this reason it has been characterized by a highly self-conscious integration of theory and practice. Indeed, documentary's major theoreticians in its classical period, Grierson and Dziga Vertov, were also among its greatest practitioners. Thus it makes good sense to be familiar with the original theoretical approach of a given documentarist.

Yet at the same time it is dangerous for a documentarist's writings to be the student's only source. Riefenstahl's lengthy reminiscence of the making of OLYMPIA, written twenty years after the fact in a transparent attempt at self-justification, is obviously an extreme example of this danger. Barsam is to be credited for providing the first English translation of this piece in his present anthology, but it is surely the height of irresponsibility to include this now-disputed information without any editorial qualification whatsoever. Even with a theoretician as brilliant and clearsighted as Grierson, we should not continue to rely exclusively on the original texts, particularly in anthologies, where there is a tendency to blur the specific historical formation of individual works. It is regrettable then that, of the entries in the theoretical section, only one is by a non-participant in the documentary scene.

What's more, the texts by Grierson and Rotha and a few others anthologized here are already widely available.[2] The same is not true of other bodies of theoretical literature on documentary which are lamentably missing from this book, particularly those of the Soviet and French traditions. It is here that Barsam's decision to limit his focus to the English-speaking world is most unfortunate. (This timorousness in conception marred *Nonfiction Film* as well.) Vertov's theoretical writings, after all, constitute the first important body of documentary theory (not Grierson's, as Barsam claims), are probably further-reaching in their contemporary ramifications than Grierson's, and moreover are very hard to come by in English. Despite the endeavor of Erik Barnouw and the late French critic Georges Sadoul (whose study *Dziga Vertov* also needs translation) to ensure Vertov's legacy as a documentarist, this legacy has been distorted by the spotty sampling of Vertov's writings which have appeared in journals such as *Artforum*, *Film Culture*, and *Film Comment*, where they have been selected and edited so as to emphasize Vertov's avant-gardist, modernist affinities, to the detriment of his remarkable achievement as a social theorist and documentary practitioner.[3] Here is a gap which one wishes that Barsam had filled.

By far the most useful part of Barsam's anthology is the section on documentary and history. Some of the entries here do break new ground; for example, the editor's own illuminating article on THIS IS AMERICA, the newsreel serial introduced by RKO in 1942 to compete with Time, Inc.'s THE MARCH OF TIME. To be sure, the article needs some materialist overview, but on the whole it provides a suggestive departure point simply by virtue of its detailed compilation of the series' subjects and other similar factual material.

The same cannot be said however for the companion article on THE MARCH OF TIME by Richard Elson, who, as Barsam neglects to mention, is more or less the company historian of Time, Inc., the producer of the famous series. And Elson's favor with Time, Inc. (which not incidentally published the original two book-length histories of the company from which the Elson entry is excerpted) is evident in his blatant partisanship and lack of analysis. Articles by Richard Dyer MacCann on American World War II documentaries and on the USIA propaganda films of the sixties are considerably more scholarly and more informative.

Valuable as it is, this section too ultimately reflects the specific ideological bias of the editor's approach. Five of the eight topics from documentary history included here deal with initiatives undertaken by various branches of the British and American governments, and the rest deal with projects by huge private corporations such as Time, Inc. There is no sense whatever in this sampling of the tremendous inspiration that documentary has also received from those engaged in struggle *against* the producers of Barsam's films and their patrons, from the impetus of anti-establishment filmmakers using documentary as a force for genuine social change, not social stabilization. I'm thinking of the radical workers' film movements in both the U.S. and Britain during the thirties; the American Film and Photo League and Frontier Films are the best known of these, but some fascinating material has also recently come to light on their British counterparts.[4] And what about all of the prolific documentary activity stemming from the American New Left and Feminist Movement in the last decade?

In every case, the editorial choices are ideologically predetermined: we get an article by the producer of TWENTIETH CENTURY, for example, but only passing reference to Edward Murrow's SEE IT NOW programming of the early and mid-fifties; we get disproportionate emphasis on Willard van Dyke, but no mention of Paul Strand and Leo Hurwitz; on Frederick Wiseman, but no mention of Emile de Antonio.

And while we're on the subject of gaps, one further (and justifiably chauvinistic) observation: no anthology purporting to deal with English language documentary can afford to dispense with the crucial, influential contribution of the National Film Board of Canada, as this one does.

It would be unjust to dwell on this anthology's distorted sense of history if it did at least present a representative range of critical methodology. But as I've suggested, it does not. There is no sample, for instance, of the robust periodical literature on documentary which has accumulated in the last decade by a new generation of critics, Barsam's own contemporaries, in fact; and of course there is no representation whatsoever of the materialist, semiotic, and/or feminist approaches which have come to be vital to that literature. Barsam's own unconsciously auteurist approach is what is most in evidence.

A final note is that the editor should have been more careful with a few key facts. It might not be so important to get the title of Walther Ruttmann's 1927 city film right (it should be BERLIN: SYMPHONY OF A GREAT CITY not SYMPHONY OF A GREAT DAY), but more seriously, twice Barsam claims that Lindsay Anderson's piece on the British Free Cinema was written in 1950 when it, in fact, dates from seven years later. And it should have been mentioned that Joris Ivens' account of the filming of SPANISH EARTH, though published in book form in 1969, was first written about twenty-five years earlier. The errors about Anderson and Ivens contribute to a serious misreading of the respective articles.

All in all, the book will probably get a lot of mileage in documentary courses across the country. This fact points once again to the insidious power of textbook producers to mold our conception of history as students and teachers. And even worse, in addition to distorting our radical documentary legacy and being quite hard on the pocketbook, Barsam's book--safe, conventional, and unillustrated--is going to turn a lot of people off documentary and its rich potential as a political force.

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[1] Barsam's claim that he has balanced things out by including two other non-anglophone filmmakers, Joris Ivens and Alberto Cavalcanti, doesn't hold water, since these filmmakers are dealt with in terms of their roles in the American and British documentary, respectively. Including two long Riefenstahl articles in this collection makes as much sense as discussing CRIES AND WHISPERS in a history of the Hollywood western.

[2] Incredibly enough, seven of Barsam's entries are to be found in Lewis Jacob's similarly motivated but infinitely richer anthology, *The Documentary Tradition*, published in 1971, but still in print. This anthology still remains by far the best solution to the documentary textbook dilemma when used in combination with Erik Barnouw's *Documentary!*, which is a lucid chronological narrative of the tradition documented by Jacobs. Barsam's repetition of Jacobs' selections constitutes needless duplication.

[3] The most blatant example of such editorial distortion is in a March 1972 *Artforum* reprint of a 1926 Vertov text, accompanying Annette Michelson's influential article on Vertov, "MAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA: From Magician to Epistemologist." Editor Michelson discreetly omits a long passage from Vertov's original diary entry without notifying the reader of this deletion, even by means of punctuation. In the deleted passage, Vertov proclaims his principal task to be the edification of the Soviet peoples and then discusses the task of socialist construction (the subject of his films before and after the entry) in terms of the most prosaic details of economic conditions. For the complete text, see the French edition of Vertov's writings (Dziga Vertov, *Articles, Journaux, Projets*, edited by *Cahiers du cinema*, Editions 10/18, p. 216).

[4] Bert Hagenkamp, "Film and the Workers' Movement in Britain, 1929-1939." *Sight and Sound*, Spring 1976, p. 69. ■

GRIERSON AND THE OLD BOYS

--William Guynn

> Elizabeth Sussex, *The Rise and Fall of the British Documentary* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1976). 219 Pgs. $11.95.

Elizabeth Sussex has, in certain respects, made a valuable contribution to the reassessment of the British documentary film. Her work is particularly important since she offers film scholars what will probably be the last major direct testimony given by the documentarists on their movement. Utilizing an exhaustive series of taped interviews with all the central figures of British documentary, Sussex has selected and edited her material to create a montage of documentary voices, which she compares to John Grierson's description of the documentary genre--"the creative treatment of actuality." Her book follows a narrative format, as she asked each interviewee "to tell his story from beginning to end," and she has grouped the texts of the interviews around the major events which shaped British documentary from 1930 through the post-war decline. This unusual format produces some illuminating results. We are given several, often conflicting, perceptions of the history of the movement, which reveal the organizational problems, the methods of work, the personal and bureaucratic clashes within the organization, and the relationship of the movement to its sponsors in government and industry. Moreover, Sussex has provided her readers with some new material, in particular, commentaries on the impact of sound on the British ducumentary and the documentarists' post-mortem analyses of the reasons for the demise of their movement.

There are, however, a number of weaknesses in Sussex's work. Since she has chosen a narrative format, conditioned by the autobiographical frame she imposed on the interviews, the commentaries she collected are largely anecdotal in character--reflections which are often colored by the individual filmmakers' often sentimentalized or embittered memories. Despite the author's stated purpose of demythologizing the movement, much of what is related by the filmmakers is the sort of inconsequential reminiscences, which, one supposes, are only tolerable coming from aging geniuses. Consequently, few important questions, particularly political ones, are addressed at all directly. Sussex has chosen to intervene very little, except to inform her readers about the historical setting for the filmmakers' remarks and occasionally to give a judgment based on her recent viewing of the films in question. As Sussex relates in the epilogue to her book, it was the movement's founder, John Grierson, who, after giving Sussex what was probably the last interview before his death, asked her to write "a very different kind of book" from the one she had projected. He urged her to "explore the whole economic and political background out of which documentary had sprung." Sussex declined Grierson's suggestion that she study the economic and political forces which had formed British documentary, intimating that such a book would not be about filmmaking at all. But, in a sense, Grierson was absolutely right. British documentary was political filmmaking and demands political analysis.

Despite Grierson's exhortation, the British documentary does not stand up well under close political scrutiny, if one judges the movement from the perspective of the interest of the British working class. The political study Grierson had in mind would doubtless have portrayed the documentarists as highly moral social servants, who, in response to the massive unrest and economic turmoil of the depression years, brought the heroic working class to the screen for the first time. Doubtless such a work would have extolled the documentary's attempts to achieve distribution outside the commercial film trade and to undertake mass "education" in the interest of "democracy." This kind of political analysis has, in fact, already been written by the documentarists themselves, in particular Grierson and Paul Rotha. Such analyses are attempts to whitewash a movement which, despite its supposed anti-capitalist stance, participated in the historic betrayal of the British working class during a period of potentially

revolutionary upsurge of the masses.

As I indicated in an article in Jump Cut No. 6 and as the documentarists themselves affirm, British documentary tied itself politically to social democracy. The basis for a Marxist understanding of British social democracy was laid by Engels, and it was Lenin who subsequently analyzed and denounced social democracy's betrayals. Social democracy is a historically developed political movement--a product of imperialism--which acts in the interest of capitalism to stifle working class militancy. The major agency of social democracy in Britain is the British Labour Party. In the following passage, Lenin shows how capitalism makes its political transaction with social democracy and its ideologues:

> *. . . the political institutions of modern capitalism--press, parliament, associations, congresses, etc.--have created political privileges and sops for the respectful, meek, reformist and patriotic . . . Lucrative and soft jobs in the government or on the war industries committees, in parliament and on diverse committees, on the editorial staffs of "respectable" legally published newspapers or on the management councils of no less respectable and "bourgeois law abiding" trade unions--this is the bait by which the imperialist bourgeoisie attracts and rewards the representatives and supporters of the "bourgeois" labor parties . . .*[1]

Thus, paid off in petty privileges, social democracy places itself in the service of capitalism. In times of economic crisis and social unrest, it sows illusions about the reformability of the capitalist system, and, during imperialist war, it promotes social chauvinism and pleads the cause of national "unity." As exponents of social democracy, the documentarists assumed the task of pleading the case for capitalism and the capitalist state before the working class public. Thus British documentary was fed by capitalism run amok. Documentarist Stuart Legg, reflecting on the death of the documentary movement, puts his finger on the problem: "Now it's possible, I think, that the governmental role of it might return to some kind of meaningful role, if things began to go wrong . . . it does thrive on unrest, on difficulties, where governments feel they've got to communicate" (Sussex, p 203).

It is necessary, therefore, to judge British documentary in the context of class struggle in Britain in order to see where this avowedly political film movement placed its class loyalities and to understand how British documentary was marked in all its aspects by its subservience to capitalism. Only as Marxists can we explain what Elizabeth Sussex calls the peculiar "establishment" quality to be found in these films about the working class, or the lack of a spirit of rebellion among the filmmakers, or even the artistic mediocrity which characterizes the "bloody dreary" films they produced. A Marxist analysis cuts through the shabby theorizing of the social democratic documentarists to show how the capitalist state and capitalist industry manipulated and shaped British documentary by wielding its most powerful weapon--money. It is only in the light of a Marxist analysis that the ups and downs of the British documentary movement--so frustrating and confusing for the filmmakers who participated in it--make any sense at all. To Marxists it is clear that British documentary was caught in the class forces of Britain in crisis. It was the need to maintain capitalist rule which called British documentary into being in the turmoil of the depression, and it was the propagandistic needs of capitalism which made British documentary flourish during the war. It was the capitalist state which, after the war, consigned British documentary to the bureaucratic trash heap, along with the other vestiges of social democratic reformism, and persecuted the movement's leader, John Grierson, in a McCarthy-like witch hunt--the same Grierson who had showed himself a loyal supporter of the capitalist system. It is not surprising that the documentarists felt the bitter sting of ingratitude, particularly when the short-lived post-war social democratic government, which, in their eyes, should have assured the triumph of their kind of socialism, spurned the documentarists' mild-mannered social exposures as an embarassment to the state.

Elizabeth Sussex's work does not contribute to a political assessment of the British documentary film. It does, however, offer Marxist readers a revealing narrative on that film movement. For those who read the documentarists' commentaries in the context of the class struggle, The Rise and Fall of the British Documentary eloquently describes the plight of filmmakers who made themselves, unwittingly or cynically, tools of the capitalist class, and, in so doing, degraded themselves both politically and artistically. It is difficult for filmmakers, who need capital in order to function as artists, to resist domination by bourgeois ideology. It is only surprising that the British documentarists sold themselves for so little.

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[1] V.I. Lenin, "Imperialism and the Split in Socialism" (1916), in *Against Revisionnism* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1959), p. 330. ■

The Fugitive Kind

--Russell Campbell

Bill Nichols, ed. *Movies and Methods: An Anthology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1976), $7.95.

American publishers have a penchant for huge compendiums; perhaps they feel that if they just keep adding, they'll be sure to reach the critical Hegelian point at which quantity is transformed into quality, or perhaps, in the more pragmatic native tradition, the philosophy is simply that more is better. Bill Nichols's *Movies and Methods* is, at any rate, a large and unwieldy anthology, and trying to review it is like attempting a single-column analysis of all the plays currently on the boards in New York City.

Maybe not quite that bad. Nichols, for the most part, has left the traditional mainstream and classic revivals to his competitors and focused on the insurgent radicalism of the off- and off-off-Broadway practitioners of film study. There is more of *Screen*, that is, than of *Sight and Sound*, and even fringe journals like *Afterimage*, *The Velvet Light Trap* (and yes, *JUMP CUT*) are represented.

Nichols has clearly wanted it this way, and the blurb on the back cover virtually admits that the book was designed in contraposition to the Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen anthology *Film Theory and Criticism* (Oxford University, 1974)--making for a happy conjunction, at least on the surface, of theoretic preference and commercial viability. The Mast and Cohen book--which, incidentally, has the same number of selections (52) and pages (640) as *Movies and Methods*--is divided into sections comfortably accommodating inveterate approaches to the cinema: "Film and Reality," "Film Image and Film Language," "The Film Medium," "Film, Theater, and Literature," "Kinds of Film," "The Film Artist," "The Film Audience." The Nichols book, by contrast, presents itself as being distinctively *modern*: "The materials have been grouped in critical categories reflecting recent approaches to the medium. In place of older questions such as the relation of film to the other arts, or film's ability to capture an imprint of reality, the questions emphasized in this anthology concern film's ideological operations, the nature of film genres, the role of the auteur in the creative process, the representation of social groups (such as women) in film, the logic of narrative and formal organization in films, the treatment of films as myths, and new theoretical perspectives."

The book is actually divided into three main parts--contextual criticism (comprising political, genre, and feminist criticism), formal criticism (auteur and mise-en-scene criticism), and theory (film theory and structuralism-semiology). A priori, there are two observations one might make about this otherwise neat schematic: that genre criticism *may* be entirely formal (though in practice, like the pieces on the Western reproduced in the book, it tends to speculate on the relationship of films to society and history) and that the first subdivision of theory deserves a title that marks off something less than the entire category (since the structuralism-semiology pieces, too, are concerned with *film* theory). Such reservations aside, the classification seems a plausible one, and it does prove to be serviceable once one considers the texts Nichols has chosen.

There remains, nevertheless, a degree of arbitrariness in the allotment of articles to their rightful places, which is a mark not so much perhaps of the inadequacy of the conceptual scheme as of an interlocking of methodological approaches to film that has marked the best writing of the past ten years or so. And it *is* recent work, as advertised, that by and large comprises *Movies and Methods:* by my count there is one article dating from the '20s, none from the '30s, two each from the '40s and '50s, 15 from the '60s and 32 from the period 1970-76.

This interlocking of approach is exemplified, for instance, by the renowned collective text "John Ford's YOUNG MR. LINCOLN," by the editors of *Cahiers du cinema*. It is, as the title suggests, an exercise in auteur criticism; it is also decidedly political, and it rivals the pieces collected in the mise-en-scene section for close stylistic analysis. The article, however, is situated in the structuralism-semiology section, as a tribute to its pioneering application of semiotic concepts to film.

In general, the breaking of bounds in recent film studies has taken the exciting form of the bringing of theory to criticism. The last few years particularly have seen the emergence of a film criticism that is no longer naive, which interrogates its own assumptions, which is self-conscious and grounded in a consistent theoretical base. A revealing example of this development is afforded by the inclusion in the book of David Bordwell's 1971 piece on CITIZEN KANE along with an "Addendum, 1975" in which Bordwell lays bare the unanalyzed theoretic and aesthetic assumptions on which the article rests.

Despite the value of this delayed self-reflection, the CITIZEN KANE piece seems to be to be the one that Nichols might well have left out. If the defining characteristic of truly modern film criticism is, as I have suggested, its explicit theoretic underpinning, then the anthology might have gained a great deal of needed coherence with the omission of articles that lack a sophisticated awareness of the tools of analysis being employed. To suggest the rejection of articles such as Richard Griffith's "Cycles and Genres," Richard Thompson's "Meep Meep" (on cartoons), Raymond Durgnat's "Six Films of Josef von Sternberg," and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's "Shape and a Black Point" (a 1964 examination of Antonioni), as well as the Bordwell piece, is not to pass judgment on them as effective pieces of criticism but to argue that they belong to an earlier phase, a "childhood" or pre-history, perhaps, of critical thinking about films.

Unfortunately, the contemporary phase is not represented at its strongest by the anthology. This seems mainly because Nichols made most of his selections (as he states) in 1972-73, when the range of sophisticated theoretically grounded critical texts was considerably less extensive than it is today. A consequence is not only that important newer trends in film study, such as the application of psychoanalytic and Brechtian models, are underrepresented but that several of the selections reprinted have tended to become obsolete by virtue of the rapidly developing mastery, by critics, of the new methods of analysis.

Sam Rohdie's "Totems and Movies," for example, dating from 1969, records his disappointment that the structuralist method he employs fails to account for the "interest, power, classic greatness, sheer entertainment" of MR. DEEDS GOES TO TOWN. It has since become apparent that structuralism's forte lies more in helping to define the formal connections of groups of films (the oeuvre of an auteur, a genre) than in the elucidation of aesthetic qualities within a single work. A more recent structuralist piece would not bring such false expectations into play (nor would it give place to such unanalyzed terms as "classic greatness" or "sheer entertainment"). Alan Lovell's article "The Western," dating from the mid-'60s, is another instance of writing that has been overtaken by theoretical developments: its impressionistic handling of themes such as the treatment of the Indian and the rejection of civilization antedates the application of structuralist models to the genre by Peter Wollen, Jim Kitses, and others and fails to exemplify the rigor characteristic of contemporary film analysis.

Perhaps the feminist criticism section suffers most from the publication delay: most of the sections (Siew Hwa Beh on VIVRE SA VIE and THE WOMAN'S FILM, Karyn Kay on MARKED WOMAN, Constance Penley on CRIES AND WHISPERS) date from the first emergence of a specifically woman's approach to film and exhibit a consequent conceptual crudeness--centering on role models--not evident in other sections of the book or in more recent feminist criticism. Though Claire Johnston's astute "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema" does tend to redress the balance, it shares with the other feminist pieces included a tendency to premature sweeping judgment ("there is no doubt that Varda's work is reactionary"), and its defense of Hollywood (the discernment of "progressive elements" in Ford's SEVEN WOMEN and CHEYENNE AUTUMN) is at least problematic. The addition--had it been possible--of more recent feminist writing, such as Julia Lesage's "Feminist Film Criticism: Theory and Practice" or Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," would have greatly strengthened the section.

One of the questions the anthology should,

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and does, provoke is the extent to which the alternative approaches outlined and exemplified are theoretically compatible with one another. The position adopted by Nichols (in his introduction and short prefatory remarks to each text) seems to be basically a contented pluralism, a willingness to adopt any methodology (of those, at least, represented here) as long as it has not rigidified into dogma. Cross-fertilization he also applauds. Though I have no quarrel with this openness to critical experimentation at this stage in the development of film study, more thought should be devoted to the political and aesthetic stance one is committed to by the adoption of specific approaches--thought that will make clearer the ways in which a hybrid methodology may or not prove profitable.

There is, in particular, an epistemological disjunction between those methods (notably auteurism) seeking to elucidate single works and those (Marxist and semiological) aimed at providing a model for a total system. That these may set uneasily with one another is evidenced by the *Cahiers* YOUNG MR. LINCOLN article. In this case there is something quixotic in militant French Marxists training their critical guns on a minor film (in terms of public response) made in the United States 30 years previously--a choice of object intelligible only in terms of a lingering auteurist nostalgia for the Hollywood the authors were now chiefly intent on exposing and subverting. The incongruity, it must be said, was noted by the *Cahiers* editors, who have done no further work along these lines. (Parenthetically, the weakness of this article's attempt to define the historical determinations of the film, observed by Nichols in his introduction, should also be borne in mind. Such limitations in contextual understanding, perhaps derived from the curious cross-cultural nature of so much film study, are too common. Specifically, it is hard to view YOUNG MR. LINCOLN as Republican propaganda at a time when Abe was, among other things, one of the favorite totems of the Communist Party.)

The *Cahiers* article is by no means fatally flawed by its mixed critical methodology, however, and there are other selections in the book that amply demonstrate the advantages to be gained from a flexible, multi-levelled analysis when the interrelationships are systematically understood. I recommend in particular Brian Henderson's "Toward a Non-Bourgeois Camera Style," an examination of the ideological implications of Godard's tracking shots that merges the best of mise-en-scene and political approaches (and is included in the film theory section). This piece triumphantly signals the inadequacy of mere formal criticism, careful and systematic as it may be (as in, for instance, "Some Visual Motifs of Film Noir" by J. A. Place and L. S. Peterson) and points the way for future fruitful work.

Theorists will no doubt quarrel with the selection of texts in part 3 of the book, which is naturally oriented to the position Nichols himself adopts, as developed in his own "Style, Grammar, and the Movies" (reprinted as the final article). Nichols, in line with the general anti-Metz stance taken by the *Film Quarterly* critics, lays stress on the analog functioning of film communication, denying that it can be reduced to a digital model similar to that of language. Whatever the merits of this particular argument, Nichols's passionate advancement of it lends his book a tone of acknowledged partisanship rare among scholarly anthologies.

Movies and Methods is, as I have suggested, an unwieldy book. The interweaving between the diverse texts that Nichols rightfully takes as a sign of the growing collectivization of film studies does take place, but not to a truly satisfying extent. In the ultimate analysis, the volume will be valued not as a guide to new directions in film study (it is already too outdated for that) but as a convenient source for many fugitive texts--which is, after all, the main justification for an anthology. ■

Periodical Roundup

A new film quarterly, *Wide Angle*, has just completed its first year and has published some very interesting material. Devoting each issue to a special topic, they have covered early American cinema, Hawks, Godard, and Japanese cinema. The last two are the most interesting. The Godard issue (NO. 3) has a major article by *Jump Cut* editor Julia Lesage on visual distancing in Godard's films and two articles by French critic Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier whose work deserves more recognition. Because of a general lack of knowledge about Japanese film and culture here, *Wide Angle* NO. 4 is particularly interesting. Guest editor J.L. Anderson emphasizes the crucial need for critics of Japanese film to "familiarize themselves with the milieu in which the film was produced." He includes a handy bibliography. Box 388, Athens, OH 45701. $6.50 (US & Canada)/$8 elsewhere for 4 issues.

Film Form, NO. 1 (Spring 76), includes articles on semiotics, ideology, and narrative structure, in some instances working with specific films and in others discussing or evaluating whole areas (Soviet socialist realism, Metz's "grande syntagmatique," early development of film form). $2 per issue; $5 for 3 issues to Room 117, Squires Bldg., Sandyford Rd., Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 8ST, England. NO. 2 will be out soon.

Editor Anthony Macklin has announced that *Film Heritage*, after 12 years, has ceased publication. The spring 77 issue has a useful index of volumes 1-11 as well as interviews with cinematographers Oswald Morris and Vilmos Zgismond. Send 75¢ to U. of Dayton, Information Services, Dayton, OH 45469.

A new auteurist film magazine, published in New York, *Cinemabook*, states its purpose as follows: "Godard, Truffaut, Rivette, etc. proved that it is possible to write about films and then go out and make them; what they wrote they called 'making films without a camera.' This is what we are trying to do." They then praise Hitchcock for subjecting "communist utopianism and American optimism" to "harsh scrutiny" in TOPAZ and finding them "equally at odds with reality." The second issue has a series of articles on DePalma. 344 E. 50th Street, New York, NY 10022.

The second annual publication of *The Film Reader* makes important theoretical texts by Todorov and Cômolli available for the first time in English. The articles cover narrative structures in film and the relation between industry, technology, and ideology. Film Department, Northwestern, Speech Annex, Evanston, IL 60201.

The fall 76 issue of *Cinema Journal* features articles on film history: Méliès, Satie's score for ENTR'ACTE, early sound processes. Publication Order Dept., U. of Iowa, 17 W. College St., Iowa City, IA 52242. $4 for 2 issues a year.

Film Culture is publishing a massive triple decker documentary biography of Maya Deren this year. The Legend of Maya Deren includes articles she wrote in socialist youth journals in the thirties. This will be available as part of a 2-year subscription for $16.00 USA, $20.00 abroad. Film Culture, G.P.O. Box 1499, NYC, 10001.

The very first Shakespeare on Film Newsletter appeared in December, the kind of pedant's delight that comes with three holes punched on the left so you can slide it into your binder without looking at it. Among the snappier articles: "Goneril Without a White Beard", "Shakespeare on Film--For Under $50." and "Writing Papers for a S/F Course." SFNL is available from Dept. of English, U. of Vermont, Burlington, VT, 05401. ($1 for 2 issues.)

Quarterly Review of Film Studies is trying to become the leading academic film publication, but still lacks a distinct personality. Recent issues have reprinted conference papers. Although the future looks better with thematic issues planned, the absurdly high price makes it a luxury item and a publication for libraries only. Redgrave Publications, 430 Manville Rd., Pleasantville, NY 10570. $14 a year.

The May 77 issue of *Filmmakers Newsletter* has a notable article on "The selling of THE DEEP," which describes the entire advertising campaign for a major film. Although the article is not critical, it is extremely detailed and provides useful background material for anyone interested in a radical analysis of distribution. P.O. Box 115, Wardhill, MA 01830. $9 a year.

The first issue of *Single Take*, a student-produced film magazine from Southern Ill. U., has articles on Abel Gance, Kurosawa, and on Hitchcock's and Keaton's portrayal of women. Our copy arrived with no price or sub info. Inquire at Cinema Dept., S.I.U., Carbondale, IL 62901.

Ciné-Tracts is a new Canadian theoretical political film and communications journal. It's first issue regrettably uses about 1/3 of its pages to reprint articles relatively accessible to British and U.S. readers. Of most interest were the letters of scriptwriter John Berger to the actors of Tanner's THE MIDDLE OF THE WORLD. Berger discusses the concept of sexual passion he held in creating the two main characters in the film. 4227 Esplanade Ave., Montreal, P.Q. Canada. $8 Canada/$10 Foreign for one year.

Liberation, the unofficial theoretical organ of the libertarian anarcho-pacifist left, recently changed from a collective to a two-editor organization. It continues an emphasis on culture with a provocative essay by Paul Buhle, "The Pinking of American TV" (June 77) and an investigation of radical novelist, B. Traven (*Treasure of the Sierra Madre*) by Jonah Raskin (July-August 77). Typically uneven, an earlier issue featured a reactionary article praising methadone.

The second issue of Praxis: A Journal of Radical Perspectives on the Arts provides 260 pages of original critical articles, translations, poems, and reproductions of political art. Naomi Green's report from the Venice Film Festival strikes a hard-to-reach balance in festival reports between evaluating the entire festival in political terms and giving a close evaluation of the most significant films. This issue $3.50. Subs (3 issues) $9.00 (institutions $16). 640 Arlington Av., Berkeley, CA, 94707.

All of a sudden, after a certain lapse, here are two Velvet Light Traps (No. 16 & 17). The first they've devoted to sex and violence. It includes articles on Corman and Bronson, CLOCKWORK ORANGE and DIRTY HARRY. Number 17 is great--a collection of articles from the first 8 issues (now out of print). Subs (4 issues) $5.00 (institutions $10) to Old Hope Schoolhouse, Cottage Grove, WI, 53527.

The first issue of Camera Obscura, A Journal of Feminism and Film Theory, is now available. The collective's programmatic initial article stresses that their "analysis recognizes that women are oppressed not only economically and politically, but also in the very forms of reasoning, signifying and symbolical exchange of our culture." They feature collectively written articles on Yvonne Rainer, Jackie Raynal and also a translation of Jean-Louis Baudry's "The Apparatus." Subs (3 issues) $6.00 (institutions $12). P.O. Box 4517, Berkeley, CA, 94704.

Media Montage has interesting articles on film and TV. No. 2 had a great article on Leave it to Beaver and what happened to the stars. Jerry Mathers (Beaver) is now a bank manager, Tony Dow (Wally) a contractor, and Ken Osmond (Eddie) an L.A. cop. Sub (4 issues) $2.50 (no overseas subs). 709 West 12th St. No. 9, Bloomington, IN, 47401.

Film Notebooks, a quarterly, has begun publication in Santa Cruz, Calif. All the articles are written by either students, staff, or alumni of the U. of Calif. at Santa Cruz. Janey Place advances the idea that Sirk is a subversive artist and John Mraz talks about history and myth in Altman's BUFFALO BILL. Steven Nelson discusses the discrepancy between form and content in Godard's VIVRE SA VIE. In fact the search for an interpretation of this discrepancy underlies the whole magazine. Film Group, Stevenson College, UCSC, Santa Cruz, CA 95060. 75¢/issue (no sub price given).

Televisions is an exciting journal that is a must both for film people who want to know (learn) about video and for activists who would like to hear how media are used in the community. Articles cover television and video institutions, laws, technology, and especially their uses. Washington Community Video Center, P.O. Box 21068, Washington, D.C., 20009. Subs $10.

A special issue of Morning Due: A Journal of Men against Sexism, contains an extensive report on the faggots and class struggle conference held in September in Oregon. The presentations are very solid; the transcribed discussions, organizers' commentaries, and letters are challenging and self-critical too. This was an important conference for male gay liberation and thus for all of us. Send $1.25 and some stamp money to P.O. Box 2228, Seattle, WA, 98122.

The new Women, A Journal of Liberation (vol 4, No. 4) concentrates on women and aging. The articles, poems, photos, and drawings bring a socialist feminist perspective to the problem of aging as a woman in a capitalist, sexist society. Subs (3 issues) $5.00 (institutions $15) to 3028 Greenmount Ave., Baltimore, MD, 21218.

A scholarly summary of current work in the area of psychoanalysis (Lacanian) and cinema can be found in the Edinburgh '76 Magazine, no. 1: Psychoanalysis/Cinema/Avant-Garde. (3 Randolph Crescent, Edinburgh EH3 7TJ, Scotland, 94 pp., $5 (including airmail postage to the USA). The festival hopes to publish similar scholarly works in succeeding years.

A magazine useful for understanding the political background of Latin American films is NACLA's Latin American and Empire Report. NACLA (North American Congress on Latin America) publishes the Report ten times a year at a rate of $10 (institutions $16). Their "analysis begins with an understanding of imperialism as a global system." Some fine recent articles on Chile, Del Monte, the role of women's labor in the economy, and U.S. police operations in Latin America. Write to NACLA, P.O. Box 226, Berkeley, CA, 94701.

Radical America continues its lively interest in culture in addition to politics with an interview with Barbara Kopple on the making of HARLAN COUNTY, USA (Mar-Ap 77) and an article on beauty parlors considered as women's space (May-June 77). P.O. Box B, North Cambridge, MA 02140. $10 for 6 issues.

Continued on page 36

CRITICAL DIALOGUE

Debate On *Chac*

Dear *Jump Cut*

When Shelton H. Davis' caustic critique on CHAC appeared in one of the back issues of *Jump Cut*, over a year ago, in spite of all his misinformation, I felt no urge to reply. I presumed that it would be apparent to anyone that his preconceived animosity and his lack of objectivity towards the film had gone to the extreme of making the whole review senseless. Now that extracts of that article have appeared in Film Review Digest Annual, 1976, plus the fact that CHAC is building a steady following in the Bay Area, I believe that it is time to straighten the record.

Davis admits that he felt uneasy about CHAC even before seeing the film. "I felt tense in the moments before the film was shown," he writes. "What was that tension about, why those feelings inside?" Apparently he came with the preconceived notion that I had exploited the Tzeltal Indians for my own personal greed. Those feelings must have been so strong in him as to make him completely unreceptive from the start. What I wish to clarify though, is his pile of gruesome misinformation.

For starters, let me illustrate his misconceptions with a simple example. I quote Davis: "Those shots of barren, unproductive, drought-ridden hills, were not taken in Tenejapa, but further to the South in Comitan, where no Mayan Indians live." Actually those shots he mentions were done at the milpa of one of the local Tzeltals, on a hill 500 yards away from the Main Plaza of Tenejapa. As far as the film is concerned it would not have mattered if those scenes were shot in Comitan, 150 miles away, because there are Mayan Indians in the Comitan area, contrary to what Davis says. Indians of Mayan descent are spread all over the South of Mexico in the States of Chiapas, Campeche, Yucatan, Quintana Roo and in Guatemala. In spite of their common ancestry, communities have developed with very different dialects and customs, to the extreme that the Lacandones of the Chiapas jungle, for example, and the Tzeltales of Tenejapa, although living less than 100 miles apart, do not understand each other's language. Now Davis, having lived in a Mayan community in Guatemala, claims to speak a language "similar to Tzeltal and immediately was aware that the dialogue of the Indians didn't match the subtitles of the film." He adds: "Many times they were making comments with stern faces which were just jokes between themselves." Why couldn't Davis come up with examples to such a serious, unfounded accusation? Once again, in his passion, he has confused presumption with truth. He must have felt that that was the way the Indians would get even with me for having exploited their services.

Actually the dialogue was translated and worked out by the Indian actors months before shooting started. We had rehearsed so much that by the time we began filming, we all knew every line by heart, and there was no room for ad-libbing away from the script. Besides, the scenes were covered from various angles in a very conventional manner and the only way we could edit the film afterwards was by having the same lines delivered in each take. So I payed very close attention to the dialogue.

What Davis forgot to mention (or didn't realize) was that not only Tzeltal but 2 other dialects are also spoken in the film. Davis missed other things too. Or, in his obstinate negativism, saw them falsely. Some insignificant ones like store bought cigars when they were hand made (the Lacandones actually plant tobacco and roll their own). But then he also saw the the Diviner levitating during the rain ceremony, when in reality (and in the film) he remained motionless throughout, praying right on the ground, face to the fire. Some kind of magic the film must have had to make him see what wasn't there.

In his closing comment, Davis talks about the amount of wood that we burned for the ceremony. I quote: "For those who don't know, the really scarce resource in highland Chiapas is firewood rather than water. That Klein could have destroyed so much of this firewood in the filming of this scene is gross beyond belief. Indian children in communities such as Tenejapa die because there is no firewood to heat them in the cold, rainy nights." Well, Davis, I hate to break this news to you but, in reality, that impressive bonfire you saw was fed through underground pipes, using liquid gas as fuel. The wood worked as a screen, creating the illusion of a monumental pile of burning firewood. That just proves to you, Davis, that you shouldn't believe everything you see in the movies.

All this is just petty gossip. What we should look at is what triggered Davis' anger. "The production of CHAC," he says, "represents a new phase in the film industry's exploitation of Indian people . . . . My impression is that he and his sponsors, are interested in cashing in on a market both, in this country and in Latin America." Anybody in the film industry knows well that a subtitled movie with no name stars and unknown director has practically no chances of recuperating its cost. So your argument doesn't hold water, Davis.

Whatever my reasons for making this film, Davis truly believes that I have manipulated and deceived the Indians and the audience. And that belief seems to be the problem. From a director's point of view, I have to say, yes, of course I manipulated. That is what a film director does: he manipulates people and objects and molds them to the imagery of his soul. You think that Eisenstein, with all his Leninist convictions, did not use extras like cattle during his crowd scenes? In CHAC the actors happened to be Indians, so many white liberals become over-sensitive towards them. As if they were a rare species of extinct birds, that need to be protected condescendingly. It is the guilt transpiring after all those decades of colonialism.

Like Davis, I also spent two years in Mayan country. And many more, researching in libraries. CHAC reflects the way I saw that culture, in my own eyes. It is a personal account of the powers of its ancestry.

Davis is right. In Tenejapa it doesn't happen that way. CHAC is not an anthropological documentary. It is a film about myth. The indians are exploited in it like actors in a play. But in a play they can relate to. Rooted in its own heritage. Every element in that story has its reference to Mayan myth or tradition. From the Popol Vuh, to the frogs, to the blow gun and the dwarf. Woven from stories they told me or their ancestors told others.

If nothing else, this film is creating a certain awareness. It focuses attention on a dying culture, ruthlessly crushed by our evergrowing technological society. A culture that perhaps holds truths that we, with our bag of apparent sophisticated progress, don't even begin to fathom. You see, Davis, we may even be on the same team, after all.

Sincerely,

Rolando Klein

Dear *Jump Cut:*

It is nearly two years since I saw CHAC and wrote the review which appeared in *Jump Cut* No. 7. I do not wish to comment on all the details in Mr. Klein's letter, because I think they would only bore your readers. There are two points, however, I wish to make.

The first point concerns the exploitation of native peoples, whether by anthropologists or independent filmmakers. As I noted in my *Jump Cut* review, before seeing CHAC I had read Hans Ehrmann's article, "The Making of a Mayan Movie," in the March 28, 1975 edition of the *Berkeley Barb*.

Ehrmann noted that a number of labor problems arose in the filming of CHAC. The Indian cast was said to have gone on strike over wages on three occasions. Pablo Canche Balam, the main actor, was claimed to have slipped 100 feet in filming one scene. Part of the crew was described as nearly drowning when a canoe overturned. A group of actors were said to have rented a bus in order to escape from a sequence being shot in Comitan.

All of these things were mentioned in Ehrmann's article and noted in my review. The point, though, is that practices such as these are typical of both anthropologists and filmmakers in their approaches to native communities. The term "intervention," I believe, is too neutral to describe such a situation. More appropriate would be the term "exploitation." Unfortunately, such exploitation of native peoples has become standard practice in anthropological fieldwork, and (according to Hans Ehrmann's article) seemed to have characterized the making of Mr. Klein's film.

My second point concerns Mr. Klein's comment that CHAC is a "film about myth." The point of my review was to show that CHAC was not about myth, but that it was a myth itself--i.e., that it was a figment of Mr. Klein's imagination.

Now, some people may like to see myths about Indians. I myself, however, think that such myth-making is pernicious. It obscures, as I noted in my review, the real survival issues which indigenous peoples face. It overlooks the social, political, and existential conditions under which indigenous peoples live. It perpetuates false images about groups of people whose major desire is to be left alone. It was for these reasons that I quoted from Vine Deloria's essay, "Indians: The Real and the Unreal" (in Custer Died For Your Sins), in the first paragraph of my review.

In the final paragraph of his letter, Mr. Klein states that CHAC "focuses attention on a dying culture, ruthlessly crushed by our evergrowing technological society." For anyone who has seen CHAC, this statement is a gross misrepresentation of the theme of the film. There is not a single mention in CHAC about the four centuries of oppression faced by the Mayan Indians of southern Mexico. There is no mention of the system of labor contracting in the Chiapas Highlands, whereby Indians are forced to work on large coffee plantations in exchange for a miserable wage. There is nothing about the Mexican Government's relationship to the community of Tenejapa, about the rise of political bossism in this community or the compromises which have been made in the agrarian reform. CHAC has nothing to say about these realities of life in the Highlands of Chiapas. To the contrary, as Mr. Klein states in his letter CHAC is a film about frogs, blowguns, and dwarfs.

There is much more I would like to say about CHAC, but that would take an entire book on how filmmakers and anthropologists exploit native peoples for their own professional and personal ends. I stand by what I said in my review of CHAC two years ago. It still seems to me that CHAC is an eminently worthless, but highly marketable, film.

Yours sincerely,

Shelton H. Davis

Real *Dog Day* Hero Tells His Story

What follows is an article John Wojtowicz originally sent to the *New York Times* about his reaction to the film DOG DAY AFTERNOON, a film partly based on his life, and the *Times'* interesting rejection letter. *Jump Cut* has reprinted this article from *Gay Sunshine: A Journal of Gay Liberation*, No. 29/30, Summer/Fall, 1976, ($10 for 12 issues, $15 Canada and overseas. Free to those incarcerated in prisons or mental hospitals. P.O. Box 40397, San Francisco 94140.) *Gay Sunshine* reviewed DOG DAY AFTERNOON in issue No. 26/27, and *Jump Cut* reviewed the film in issue No. 11/12.

In May, 1976 John Wojtowicz was transferred to the Federal Correctional Institution at Lompoc, California, where he still is. --eds.

December 22, 1975

Mr. John S. Wojtowicz
P.O. Box 1000
Federal Penitentiary
Lewisburg, Pennsylvania

Dear John:

I'm very sorry to say no to this after all of our correspondence, but this article just won't work for us. The problem is that I just don't believe you have profoundly come to grips with the motives for your crime, and the complex relationship between art and reality in this instance.

Sincerely,
William H. Honan
Arts and Leisure Editor
The New York Times

This is the first newspaper article I have ever written but it is necessary so you the people can know the truth. On April 23, 1973, I was sentenced to serve 20 years for armed bank robbery even though I made a deal and pleaded guilty. The powers that be did not keep their part of the deal even though I am a first offender. I'm now serving time at the U.S. Maximum Security Fortress at Lewisburg, Pa.

A movie entitled DOG DAY AFTERNOON starring Al Pacino (of THE GODFATHER) was made by Warner Bros. and based on the events of August 22nd and 23rd of 1972 for which I am now serving time. I am presently in the courts with the assistance of Mr. George Heath, another inmate in here who is a jail-house lawyer, because the Movie People (Artists Entertainment Complex, Inc. and Warner Bros.) have violated my contract with them. I have an agreement in writing for 1% of the net profits and a verbal agreement for 2% of the gross from the movie. It seems now that everyone involved is denying this. "Exploitation" is a dirty word but I have been exploited as well as my family and friends.

I have had other problems with the movie and I even had to launch a massive letter writing campaign after the Associate Warden, Mr. D.D. Grey and the Warden, Mr. F.E. Arnold in here both refused to let my movie in here after Warner Bros. had agreed to send it free of charge for all of us to see. I can report now that the outside pressure from both the Gay and straight newspapers was enough to make the officials here relent and on Friday night, 10/3/75 and also on Sunday afternoon, 10/5/75, we here finally were able to see the movie. I was allowed to see a special preview of it on Friday afternoon, 10/3/75 all alone with the exception of a guard being there. It was a very moving experience.

The movie, DOG DAY AFTERNOON, contains everything from laughter, tears, love, hate, devotion, religion, to hope, drama, and thrills. The reason I call it a "?" is because it leaves so much out and so many unanswered questions. What you are about to read are my own personal comments and feelings even though they may result in the movie losing money. They must be made.

The main reason I did what I did on 8/22-23/72 is never explained in the movie, and instead you the viewer are left with many questions. I did what a man has to do in order to save the life of someone I loved a great deal. His name was Ernest Aron (now known as Ms. Liz Debbie Eden) and he was Gay. He wanted to be a woman through the process of a sex-change operation and thus was labeled by doctors as a Gender Identity Problem. He felt he was a woman trapped in a man's body. This caused him untold pain and problems which accounted for his many suicide attempts. I met him in 1971 at an Italian Bazaar in N.Y.C. after two years of separation from my female wife, Carmen, and two children.

Ernest and I were married in Greenwich Village in N.Y.C. on 12/4/71 in a Roman Catholic ceremony. We had our ups and downs as most couples do, and I tried my best to get him the money he needed

for his sex change operation he so badly needed. I was unable to obtain the funds for his birthday on 8/19/72 and so, on Sunday, 8/29 he attempted suicide while I was out of the house. He died a clinical death in the hospital but was revived. While I went to get his clothes, he was declared mentally sick and sent to the Psychiatric Ward of Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn, N.Y. I went to see him and I tried to obtain his release on 8/21 but was told he would not be released and would stay there for a long time until he was cured.

So on 8/22/75, along with two others, I began what I felt was necessary to save the life of someone I truly and deeply loved. No monetary value can be placed on a human life, and as it says in the Bible--"No greater love hath a man than to lie down his life for another."

I regret the things that happened, but most of all that my friend, Sal Naturale, who was only 18 years old was murdered by the F.B.I. It was not necessary for them to murder him, because he had been immobilized and unable to do anything, but yet the F.B.I. murdered him before my eyes. I was also immobilized and unable to do anything. The movie never shows this as it truly happened, as it does with so many other scenes in it. I estimate the movie to be only 30% true, even though it states--"This movie is based on a true incident that occurred in Brooklyn, N.Y. on 8/22/72." All through the movie they take facts that were true but then present them differently. For example: It is true that the third person involved with us did panic and fled the bank at the beginning, but not as they have him doing it in one of the comical scenes, which are so rampant throughout the movie.

They have a scene with my mother and I outside of the bank talking to each other, but in real life we never did talk, and I never went out to see her even though she was there. A third scene shows me speaking to my female wife, Carmen, on the telephone (the actress who portrays her in the movie is an ugly and greasy looking woman with a big mouth, when in real life my wife is a beautiful and very loving wife). I did try to call her, but the F.B.I. cut the phone lines and air conditioning before I could get to speak to her on the line. I did not like the horrible way they tried to make her the blame or the scapegoat for everything that happened, especially because of the Gay aspects involved.

Now to one of the most despicable parts of the film. In it they hint very dramatically that I made some kind of a deal to betray my partner, Sal. It hurt me that the same F.B.I. who cold-bloodedly killed an 18-year-old boy can be depicted as having me help them. This is *not* true and there is no human being low enough in this world who would let the F.B.I. kill his partner in order for him to survive. It can be labeled as just Hollywood trying to sell a movie or just to increase the drama, but I call it *sick*.

Many of the men in here thought the movie was a good comedy, but most were outraged at how they misrepresented the truth and invented things that were so despicable. I even had some problems as a result of it, especially the part they invented that hinted of a deal with the F.B.I.

Now for a more pleasant side; the directing by Mr. Sidney Lumet was fantastic. The cast did an outstanding and monumental job as a whole. There are only two exceptions to this. First, the actress playing my wife, Carmen, made her look horrible and inferred that I left her and winded up in the arms of a Gay man because of her. This is completely untrue, and I feel sorry for the actress for having to play such a horrible role. Second, the actress playing my mother overdid her role, especially the overprotective Mother type baloney in it. Some of what they both said, as well as the actor portraying my lover, Ernest (called Leon in the movie) were true statements of facts, but did not really happen in the real life event as such.

Al Pacino's performance has to be called "out of sight" and the best he's ever done. I feel he deserves the Academy Award for Best Male Actor for his unbelievable performance. For almost two hours he was just fantastic. He made me laugh, cry, sweat, and feel uncomfortable at times all in one movie. His characterization was flawless.

I was very touched and cried in the most moving scene in the entire movie, the one in which he dictates my last will and testament. During this memorable scene over 1,300 men in here were completely silent, and you could hear a pin drop. For an hour and a half previously everyone was laughing, but then it all stopped and the truth and stark realism was finally presented in one of the most moving scenes I've ever seen in a motion picture.

Chris Sarandon who portrays my male lover in the movie also deserves the Academy Award for Best Male Supporting Actor. It was his film debut and he was too much for words. He had to portray the widest range of emotions but do it in the right way. I feel he did it perfectly. If in real life Ernie had said those things and done those actions, he would have done them exactly as Chris did them. In the telephone scene between Pacino and himself his performance was unfathomable and a tribute to his mastery of an unbelievably difficult role. I was moved to tears by it because the realism was there and so professionally done.

My feelings over all on the movie were that it was a good comedy but I did not think it was funny because it was about me and my loved ones. I felt the movie was in essence a piece of garbage. It did not show the whole truth, and the little it did show was constantly twisted and distorted. So it left you, the viewer with so many unanswered questions. I fault the screen writer, Mr. Frank Pierson, for not going into a more explanatory and deeper characterization of the people involved. But Hollywood wants to make money, and if sacrificing the truth or exploiting the lives of real people is the way to make money, then that's what they do.

I feel deeply hurt by the movie, and I hope that you the reader will remember the above if you have seen the movie or are about to see it. I have taken the movie people to court for the exploitation and for their breach of contract. But the battle will be a long and hard one, as will the one against the book people (Delacorte Press of N.Y. and Dell Publishing Co., Inc. and Patrick Mann, author of the hard cover and also the paperback entitled *Dog Day Afternoon)*.

It is not easy for me or my loved ones because of my imprisonment, but I am determined to do what is right as God gives me the light to see that right. Ever since I arrived here at the U.S. Penitentiary, Lewisburg, Pa., I have been treated as a "Second Class Inmate" and denied the same rights that other inmates in here are enjoying. This is because of the homosexual motive and implications of my crime. I have been arbitrarily discriminated against and harassed by the officials here. I have complained repeatedly and also filed administrative remedies to the Warden, Regional Director, and Assistant Director, but I still fail to obtain relief. I am now in the courts over this.

Further, at the present time I cannot even get legal papers notarized by the officials here to send the courts because my jail-house lawyer, Mr. George Heath's name is on them. Their refusal to notarize these legal papers is another violation of my rights in here. At one time they even refused to let me do this article for the *New York Times*, but after pressure from the *Washington Post* they relented, and so now I am doing this article.

There is a prayer that the Alcoholics Anonymous have in here that I try to live by, and it goes like this: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

John Wojtowicz

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JAWS As Submarine Movie

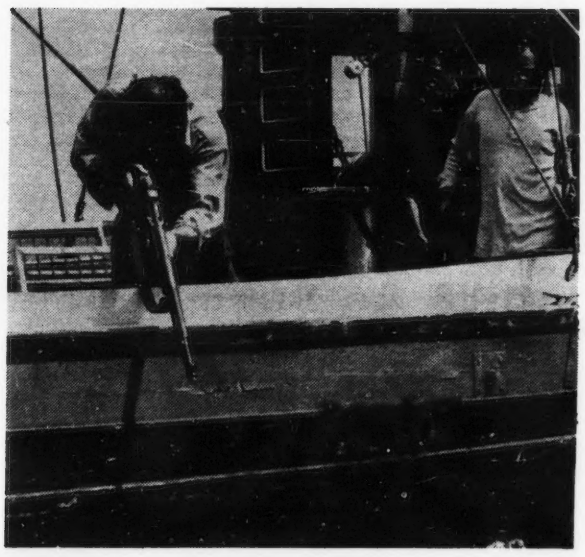
Peter Biskind's Jaws Between the Teeth (Jump Cut, Oct.-Dec. 1975) is one of the most thorough film analyses I have ever read. In it he assigns JAWS its fitting literary-generic label, calling it "a middle-class MOBY DICK." He accounts for the Freudian nature of the Shark, suggesting that its phallic shape poses a psychic threat to hero Brody, whose "fantasies of castration (like those of other men?) suggest impotence." Biskind also effectively classifies JAWS with recent films that employ similar conventions: the all-male adventure plot resembles that of DELIVERANCE; the film's disaster mood is compared to those of TOWERING INFERNO and EARTHQUAKE; and its dismemberment scenes are identified as part of a cult whose rituals are best illustrated by THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE. Biskind's *piéce de rèsistance* is his last paragraph comparison of Brody and Jerry Ford, "a nobody who makes it while everybody else auto-destructs." As Ed McMahon might observe, everything anyone would want to know about JAWS, the film and the cultural phenomenon, can be found in Peter Biskind's encyclopedic article.

Not so, shark-breath, as Johnny Carson might respond. What is missing is an analysis of a somewhat obvious problem faced by director Steven Spielberg: how to depict the proper mood of menace in such a way as to arouse the audience's latent fears of threat to the American community's safety and way of life. That is, given the Shark's enormous size and sinister, random style of destructiveness, what filmic, as opposed to novelistic conventions were available to Spielberg to help him narrate this horrific story? Biskind considers only contemporary films in his essay, overlooking the rich tradition of adventure-destruction and horror movies whose techniques come down readymade to modern directors. KING KONG, FRANKENSTEIN, THE THING, and THE HAUNTING are only a few titles in which the dilemma of a society faced with random destruction, often unleashed by stupidity or greed, is successfully portrayed. Yet in most of these plots the destroyer is humanized in some manner, with the result that the audience can rationalize the cataclysm by blaming the excesses of science, or ambition, or corruption. In JAWS, however, the force to be dealt with is mindless, "an eating machine" in Benchley's words, and no amount of romanticizing or rationalizing will explain away what it has done to Amity and its residents. The Shark also prowls the watery depths (and shallows, too), which differentiates it from the Kongs and Frankensteins of earlier epics.

This fact makes it into an even more demonic enemy than its predecessors because it cannot be seen as easily as a gorilla, and underwater tracking devices, as we have learned from the futile search for Nessie, are woefully inadequate.

In order to solve his problem of depicting the special nature of the Shark as an opponent of American society, I believe Spielberg turned not to the conventions of horror films but to those of war movies, in particular those sagas that dealt with submarine warfare between America and the Axis powers in World War II. An outrageous assertion? We need only look at Spielberg's modifications of the novel for support. The changes are purposely designed to condense and telescope the story into a battle adventure. What results is not only a tauter and more dramatic entertainment than the book but also a movie reminiscent of World War II submarine chase classics. Perceiving JAWS in this way, instead of as a pastiche of motifs from horror or science fiction films, may help to explain the impact of its major scenes as well as its overall narrative force.

Many minor touches from war movies help to create the special ambience of violence in JAWS. The enemy has no respect for women and children--they are, respectively, its first victims. No one is safe from the Shark's sneak attack. By removing the Ellen-Hooper affair from the script and concentrating on an all-male struggle against the invader, Spielberg follows a favorite cliché of war movies. Women remain on shore to welcome the conquering heroes. In World War II, multilation, severed limbs, showers of blood were to be expected in skirmishes with "the diabolical, Japanese, past masters at the art of torture." The citizens of Amity are obviously in a war with an uncivilized, un-Christian enemy. Indeed, the scene in which the Shark throttles a young boy on his rubber raft and bathers head frantically for shore conjures up memories of similar scenes of chaotic running for cover in movies about the raid on Pearl



Harbor. Though it may be stretching a point to draw this parallel, I suspect Spielberg wanted us to feel the same emotion of outrage toward the Shark devouring innocent victims as we do toward the stereotyped Japanese who were guilty of an equally dastardly "sneak attack." Also, the use of floating drums to mark and slow the Shark duplicates the visual equivalent of depth charges when they are launched against a sub.

But what first made me think of the link with war films was not this invasion motif. The parallel struck me in the amazing last scene in which Brody, holding on for dear life to the mast of Quint's sinking boat, pulls off the final round from his rifle and blows up the multi-harpooned villain. The reason the beast explodes, you will recall, is that the rifle bullet strikes a diver's air tank resting just inside those powerful jaws. A lucky shot? To be sure, but one which is not atypical of those made by American sub commanders in such films as RUN SILENT, RUN DEEP. The air tank looks, moreover, like a torpedo, the Shark has the size and sinister lines of a sub moving in for the kill, and the immediate response of an audience trained in the style of this genre is to cheer wildly at an enemy ship's annihilation. In fact the mindless killing force of the Shark is emphasized throughout JAWS in the same way as the killing machine aspect of a submarine--both are designed for no other purpose. We must also remember the propagandist treatment of Japanese sub commanders in cartoons and short subjects; they were invariably shown laughing satanically as they shot any survivors floundering in the water. In making this connection, I want to suggest that Spielberg was depending on his audience's experience with sub-war movies to provide a thematic context in which to dramatize both the Shark's obvious disdain for the rules of the Geneva Convention and Quint's desire for a personal revenge against it.

Much of what happens aboard Quint's boat recalls the motifs of the "sub" genre. His saltiness is like that of a battle-hardened commander who drives his crew to a state of

frenzy in order to prepare them for the big battle with an enemy ship that has shot his last crew and sub from under him. Actually this role fits very neatly with the one assumed by Clark Gable in RUN SILENT, RUN DEEP (1958). Gable practices his men day and night (until they believe he is nothing more than a chicken captain) so that they will become expert at delivering a "bow shot" (i.e., a surface torpedo hit on the bow of a target, no amidships) against a particularly lethal Japanese destroyer when it comes after their sub in the treacherous Bungo Straits. Gable believes this is the only way to destroy his nemesis and achieve the satisfactory revenge he seeks. As the plot develops a running battle grows up between Gable and Burt Lancaster, his popular executive officer, who believes Gable is becoming increasingly unstable and should be removed from command. At the moment of truth the ship's crew, under Lancaster, performs brilliantly while Gable, who has been injured seriously, has nightmares about a telegraphic sound he cannot quite make out. As we quickly discover, a phantom Japanese sub has been following the American boat, as it has all the others, and it moves in for the kill. However, the crew is again successful and the Bungo Straits is no longer known as the graveyard for American subs.

While I am not claiming that Spielberg had this particular movie as his model for the last scene of JAWS, the bow shot delivered by Brody as his boat is sinking places him in a heroic stance similar to that of Lancaster in RUN SILENT. Both men must act with courage to save themselves and their crews (Hooper survives, you will recall), yet they destroy the enemy not so much out of a desire for revenge but as a necessary act to safeguard the community. The vengeful hunters--Gable and Quint--are destroyed as much by their consuming hatred as by their opponents.

There are other intriguing suggestions of sub-war movie conventions in JAWS. Quint and Hooper jaw about various wounds they have received in battles with sharks during the all-night party before the final battle. Clearly the best character-revealing scene in the film, the mood of the occasion recalls bull sessions in war films when the cynical veteran and the hot-shot recruit trade quips about each other's abilities as soldiers. Much of the humor here smacks of military joking, the kind which belittles authority and values experience. It is during this bout of bravado that Quint recounts the chilling story of the sinking of the Indianapolis by a Japanese sub after the American ship had delivered the atomic bomb to Tinian. The story is not in Benchley's novel, but in the film it provides a clear justification for Quint's fierce desire for revenge against the marauding Shark. It is in his mind firmly linked to the diabolic enemy sub and the voracious shark pack that actually devoured many survivors from the Indianapolis. Then the sharks did what the Japanese normally do: eliminate survivors. A disturbing mood settles over the party as Hooper and Brody suddenly realize that in Quint they confront a force whose will is as dedicated to destruction as that of the shark they hunt.

It is also in this finely directed scene that we see the struggle between experience and inexperience; Quint's intuitive knowledge of shark-hunting is set against Hooper's bookish naiveté about the scientific value of the enemy. This struggle is a common one in many types of war movies, not just those of the "sub" genre (though Hooper's plea for the cause of science usually comes out as a plea for the value of human life). The ironic fact hinted at in this scene, however, is that it will be Brody, the frightened, seasick landlubber, doing his duty and not joining in the booze-inspired boasting of Quint and Hooper, who must take command when the moment of truth comes. Again we recall a similar motif in war films in which the lieutenant is killed and an untested corporal or sergeant is called upon to lead his recruits into battle. Of course ship captains who are plagued by self-doubt and guilt are legion in war movies: William Holden is just such a character-type in SUBMARINE COMMAND (1951), his indecision having caused the death of men under his command.

For the hunt itself, Spielberg may be inviting us to remember the cat and mouse maneuvering of another sub epic, THE ENEMY BELOW (1957). In this variation on the theme, subchaser captain Robert Mitchum and U-boat commander Curt Jergens develop mutual respect for one another's instincts as they engage in a game of hide and seek in the Atlantic. (It may be instructive of our racist beliefs that the German sub commanders are always seen as deserving our grudging respect, while the Japanese are almost always depicted as fanatical.) As Mitchum, like Quint and his crew, lobs many lethal charges in the direction of his nemesis, the German sub manages somehow to escape, surface, and ram the chaser as a final act of patriotic defiance. Neither Jergens nor Mitchum are killed, but the two ships explode and sink before their battle-weary eyes, and for a moment the enemies share a common ground. The mood is very close to that at the close of JAWS when Hooper and Brody gain new respect for one another amidst the debris of the demolished boat.

As I watched the Shark play a deceptive game with its pursuers, THE ENEMY BELOW came immediately to mind. Just as Jergens' sub maneuvers to avoid being detected, stops engines then suddenly starts them, hides beneath Mitchum's ship and unexpectedly surfaces, so the Shark exhibits the same craftiness in its battle with Quint. And when it is deeply hurt what does the beast do but ram the boat, seeking to devour its pursuer in one grand effort at victory. In precisely this manner, Spielberg locates a kind of objective correlative in the ramming scene to explain the Shark's motive for swallowing Quint. Good suspense requires that two opponents in a life and death struggle have motives, and these two killers seek out each other with a relentlessness that resembles the vendettas of wartime sailors. To write off the ramming scene as an overdone attempt to cash in on MOBY DICK's denouement is to ignore the equally supportable allusion to a film like THE ENEMY BELOW, where the nature of confrontation is explained to the audience by the World War II context. Brody's bow shot is a lucky one to be sure, but its success could be predicted by an audience prepared in the war movie genre to believe that God and right are on the American side. The shouts I heard in the theater as the Shark pieces showered into the water like shards of an enemy ship were exactly those I remember hearing as the black and white screen depicted the captain and crew of that archetypical Japanese sub scrambling to escape the rushing sea water that was taking them to the bottom for the last time.

--Robert Willson

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REPORT REPORT REPORT

Lesage Firing Protested

--Chuck Kleinhans

A steadily growing protest over the firing of Julia Lesage, a founding editor of JUMP CUT and a feminist activist, is now under way. When she was fired from her job teaching English at the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle campus (UICC), this spring, a student, faculty, and community protest began. Since then many letters to the school's administration by distinguished film scholars and critics here and abroad have protested this assistant professor's dismissal. In May a student organized meeting drew a campus crowd of over 100 enthusiastic supporters. In June, *Chicago Tribune* labor columnist Mike LaVelle wrote a scathing attack on the UICC action, seeing it as an attempt to get rid of a popular teacher concerned with urban working class students.

The protest began when Lesage was given a final year following a departmental review of her four years at Circle. The review, in which associate and full professors secretly voted, went against Lesage. In justifying the decision, the acting chairman admitted that Lesage's record of service was excellent and her teaching fully competant, however he said the department found her scholarship "unilluminating."

The main reason her work appears to be unsatisfactory is that Lesage has consistently published Marxist and feminist scholarship which her department and the UICC administration refuse to recognize as valid precisely because it is radical. (A case of exclusion by definition: if it is Marxist and/or feminist, it cannot be scholarship.) Given the secret balloting and official secrecy surrounding the decision and the appeal process, the true reasons for the dismissal are not perfectly clear, but increasingly the pattern indicates this to be a politically motivated firing of an active leftist. The politics of the firing stand out clearly when we measure the official explanations against the facts.

The Circle English department hired Lesage as its first film person in 1973. Like many others, it wanted to offer appealing high-enrollment film courses to offset falling enrollments in traditional areas. However the department has shown a narrow minded elitist disrespect for film studies. It loves the golden eggs but hates having to feed the goose.

Knowing the level of ignorance in the faculty, when coming up for review Lesage requested an outside evaluation by film specialists. A number of established cinema academics wrote evaluations, including Ron Gottesman, director of the Center for Humanities at the University of Southern California and editor of the *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*; Ron Levaco, professor at San Francisco State and translator and editor of Kuleshov; Richard Dyer McCann at Iowa, author, editor, and pioneer in establishing U.S. film studies; and Calvin Pryluck at North Carolina, a leader in the University Film Associaton. The evaluations clearly established Lesage as a respected and excellent scholar. During the departmental review these leading senior figures in film studies were dismissed as a film-world coterie of friends who uncritically support each other's work. (In fact Lesage had never met many of her evaluators before being reviewed and knew most of the others only through passing acquaintance at academic meetings.) Confronted with a delegation of Women's Studies professors, the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs claimed that Lesage's writings, such as her pioneering study of French theorist Roland Barthes ("*S/Z* and RULES OF THE GAME," JUMP CUT 12/13) were only "movie reviews in an underground newspaper" and not valid. In a similar vein, when one administrator dismissed JUMP CUT, a student responded by showing him Amos Vogel's recent praise of JUMP CUT in a regular *Film Comment* column. The appalling reply was that Vogel (a major figure in the serious appreciation of film for 25 years) and *Film Comment* had no credibility.

Asked by students to justify voting against Lesage, one senior professor admitted to not knowing what the established publications in film were but was sure Lesage had not published in them. (Ignorance is bliss!) The fact that Lesage served on three major film publications--contributing editor of *Cineaste*, associate editor of *Women and Film*, and associate editor of JUMP CUT; a remarkable recognition for any beginning academic--was turned into an astounding Catch-22. Editorial participation in three publications, according to some faculty, "proved" her work inferior because those publications would publish what she wrote automatically. Although knowing this to be an outrageous lie, the chairman never attempted to contact the editors of the publications to ascertain anything about Lesage's work.

The real explanation behind these flimsy justifications seem to be the total hostility of many English department faculty and the UICC administration to Marxism and feminism. They dismiss Lesage's work because it doesn't appear in the "right" publications, even though the people deciding don't understand the range of film publications. And they conveniently ignore the fact that *Women and Film*, *Cineaste*, and JUMP CUT have been the only established U.S. film publication which consistently publish feminist and Marxist criticism.

Administrators have used other logically inconsistent statements against Lesage. The chairman told her that her writing style was not satisfactory: it was both too pedantic and too journalistic. Similarly, the pattern of lame justification continued when the student Coalition to Save Julia Lesage met with the school's chancellor, Donald Riddle, April 27. He said, "If only a small number of people are doing that kind of work [i.e., film studies at Circle], it is important that they be first class. In my judgement, the record does not support the conclusion that she is first class." In response, Paul Chabala, editor of the student newspaper wrote, "If Julia Lesage is not first class, who do they want--God?"

The claim of poor scholarship looks even sillier when looking at Lesage's publications. She is completing a book length research guide and critical bibliography on Godard. Already two of her articles have been anthologized, three have been republished in translation abroad (Germany, Sweden, Italy), and one article was reprinted in *Screen* with a long response. In addition, Lesage has given papers at numerous academic conferences, professional meetings, and film festivals.

Since her firing many academics have written protest letters to the UICC administration attesting to Lesage's qualifications. The following are representative remarks by people whose names are well-known to anyone in film studies:

> "From the first she became a dominant figure in the critical discourse in both this country and abroad."
>
> "Many of the important film critics in America were in the room; however Julia was the most informed and informative person there."
>
> "Perhaps the simplest way of indicating my, and my colleagues' esteem for Miss Lesage is to say that if we had a position here, I would not hesitate to turn the University of Illinois' loss into our gain."
>
> "I myself consider her one of a half dozen prime movers in the effort to raise the academic standards of this relatively new discipline...."
>
> "The fact is that within her field she is a scholar, not only of rare distinction, but of international reputation."
>
> "By my standards, Dr. Lesage is a fine example of the type of film scholar who has begun to break new ground, opening up avenues for others in other disciplines."
>
> "I consider her one of the most promising film scholars in the country...."

When such evaluations are added to a consideration of Lesage's service and teaching, the results are truly impressive. In her four years in Chicago Lesage edited the program booklet for and helped organize the Chicago Women's Film Festival (1974), worked on the Revolutionary Film Festival (1976) sponsored by the Art Institute, worked with the Grey Panthers to set up a film series for senior citizens, advised the Free Street Theatre for several years, has participated in community film screenings, and has been a constant advisor and resource person for filmmakers, teachers, and community film users in the Chicago area. Speaking at a student protest meeting, Ruby Rich of the Art Institute's Film Center said, "She has made it a point to know the work [in film] going on in this city....She's been a starting point for a lot of people in Chicago."

In addition, Lesage has been very active in Circle's women's liberation group, participating with them to organize support for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment in Illinois, protest the use of student fees to show a racist, pornographic film on campus, and fight for better security for women against assault on campus. She has also worked extensively with the Chicago Women's Liberation Union, a city-wide socialist feminist organization, and has helped start study groups on Marxism and feminist film criticism.

Her remarkable contribution in community service is matched by her accomplishment in teaching. Hardly a great supporter, the head of the English department said, "Julia is a conscientious, good, competent teacher." Lesage has taught composition and introduction to literature and developed her own film and literature courses on themes, such as women or the working class. She planned and taught a special composition course for Latino students (Lesage was assistant head of the English department at the Pontifical Catholic University in Lima Peru from 1967 to 1970), and she organized a film course for Chicago trade unionists through the university's Labor Education program.

In addition she has taught Women's Studies as part of the UICC Women's Studies teaching collective. This unpaid work has involved extensive weekly meetings, planning, teaching, and administrative work during the past four years of establishing the program. Lesage has lectured on film, the arts, Third World women, sexuality, and women in the work force. Again and again her students have praised her teaching with comments such as, "She changed my life," or "the first teacher who ever really listened to students."

Why then, with this outstanding record, is Lesage being fired? On the departmental level various factors seem to be involved. Some traditionalist faculty have no respect for film and believe it incompatible with scholarship. Others (innocently or deliberately) remain ignorant of film studies but feel qualified to pass judgement on someone in it. Many refuse to grant any validity to Marxist scholarship; many deny feminist criticism and semiology any place in the university. Some faculty probably feared advancing any junior faculty. Before the meeting voting on Lesage, the chairman disseminated a proposed cutback scheme that would have eliminated faculty positions by starting with the most senior people. Part of the reason is doubtless the Circle English department's tradition of abusing junior faculty. A few years ago the department fired 19 new teachers in one year, who in turn instigated a law suit, and the chairman is currently being sued by a group of instructors over job grievances. Over the years the department became notorious for competitive hiring--giving jobs to several young people with the same specialty at the same time and then indicating only one would be kept on. In addition, the department places decision making among its 80-odd members in the hands of an inner clique. Of the 29 faculty who voted on Lesage, many had never spoken with her in her four years there. A further factor may be resentment of the quantity and quality of Lesage's writing which far outdistances that of the tenured faculty in her department.

While various factors operate here, the decisive reasons for the firing seem political, which explains the focus on Lesage's Marxist and feminist scholarship as grounds for dismissal. In the same vein, we find evidence of considerable resentment against Lesage's activist stance, although it was not cited in the firing (probably because it would instantly clarify the political nature of the firing and raise issues of free speech and academic freedom). Lesage is highly visible in campus Women's Liberation, in her AFT union local, in supporting radical student causes, and last winter and spring in a faculty group supporting a massive student coalition which protested administration plans to change admission standards to effectively exclude most urban black, latino, and working class white students at the school in favor of white, middle class suburban students. Throughout her four years at Circle Lesage has spoken out in her teaching by raising questions of the oppression of women, blacks, latinos, gays and lesbians, prisoners, and the working

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class--all subject areas many of her departmental colleagues chose to ignore.

On the administrative level, where the case is now being appealed, Lesage represents a threat to the dominant group of administrators who want to change the school, which was established ten years ago with a mandate from the Illinois legislature and Board of Higher Education to fulfill an "urban mission" of teaching urban students who couldn't afford a residential education at the central campus in Urbana or one of the other state universities and to serve as a resource for the city of Chicago by focusing on urban issues. The current executives have plans for the school as a "Harvard on Halsted Street," and they want a traditionalist and conservative faculty that will support the change. A teacher like Lesage, even with an international scholarly reputation, is too dangerous because she stands up for minority, women, and working class students.

The struggle to keep Lesage at Circle has gained considerable momentum. The Student Coalition to Save Julia Lesage will continue to confront the hierarchy over the summer and plans a new round of protests in the fall. Concerned faculty have also been pressuring for re-instatement. Community support from film people, feminists, and activists has increased, as has media coverage of the fight. Letters of support have helped bolster the effort. Peter Knauss, professor of Political Science who successfully fought a very similar attempted firing at UICC a few years ago, explains: "The question isn't one of begging for Julia's job. But the university is a public institution and vulnerable to student and public pressure. Each letter shows those in power that the issues won't just go away."

Lesage herself is optimistic about the fight. "At first," she says, "I thought I'd just leave. I'm sure I can find a better job in terms of salary, prestige, and so forth. But once the word was out that I was fired, all kinds of people told me I had to fight--teachers, students, community people, other radicals. I came to realize that although my job is the tangible object of the struggle, this is really a fight about a lot of other things. It's about having film recognized as a legitimate area of study; it's about having Marxist and feminist criticism accepted as valid in American higher education; it's about the importance of combining research with a real involvement in the social and political issues of our time."

Chicago Tribune columnist LeVelle puts it this way:

> The real issue is not whatever the university wishes to define as "scholarship" but what the definition of a "university" is. I have met college professors who I thought had the brains of turnips and the compassion of stone. They never would know their human faults because in the insular world that they lived in, no one would ever tell them....It is for her populism that she is being fired.

The battle for Lesage's job will continue into the coming academic year (at present her last one at UICC). Letters of support are needed and should be addressed to:

> Chancellor Donald Riddle, 2833 University Hall, UICC, Chicago IL 60680, with copies to Norman Cantor, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, 2703 University Hall, UICC, Dean Elmer Hadley, Liberal Arts and Sciences, 350 University Hall, UICC, and Julia Lesage, English, 2221 University Hall, UICC.

A full list of Lesage's qualifications and publications is available from JUMP CUT, 3138 W. Schubert, Chicago IL 60647. ■

The Last Word

The Politics of Editing, part one

Because the editing process and financing of a publication normally remain hidden behind the finished issue, our readers, unlike ourselves, may think of JUMP CUT only in terms of its articles and the paper's physical format. To demystify the process of putting out an independent publication and to help explain to our readers the "hidden factors" behind JUMP CUT's operation, this and several more editorials will be devoted to indicating how an interplay of practical and political considerations shapes what you read.

When you receive JUMP CUT in the mail or pick it up off a magazine display, it comes to you as a finished product, a commodity on sale in the marketplace. Like all commodities under capitalism, it appears in a mystified way--that is, the work that went into it by writers, staff, typists, printers, postal workers, and others is erased. Often we find that because our readers buy, subscribe to, or "consume" JUMP CUT like other publications, they assume that we must therefore operate like other publications. Thus some people expect that we must have offices, secretaries, salaried editors, a big budget, and so forth. But in fact we do not have any of that. Visitors often find us, to their surprise, doing the layout for the next issue on the kitchen table. Writers sometimes discover that their articles move slowly through JUMP CUT's editing process because at times the editors have had to slow down editing activity in order to work to earn money to help pay for printing the next issue.

Like other film publications in the US, JUMP CUT can only exist within the network of American capitalist relations. We deliberately use a relatively inexpensive format --offset tabloid printing from typewriter prepared copy--because we think it is important to keep our selling price as low as possible to reach the many people who can use what we print. Working with a modest format also means we can subsidize the publication ourselves and thus maintain a critical, independent political perspective.

Of course, we still have to depend on sales to be able to exist. That seems obvious, but, in fact, our dependence on sales creates in our practice certain contradictions between our political goals and the way we confront economic necessity. For example, our cover attracts newstand buyers. It is what helps persuade them to buy the issue. Now, although we clearly have a commitment to deal critically with commercial entertainment films, we would also like to give as much critical attention to--and support of--Third World and independent US film. Yet we have found from experience that when the cover and the lead article deal with a recent and popular US or Western European film, we sell substantially more issues on newstands. Politically we find it a good idea to feature criticism of a film many people have seen--they can discuss the article with friends and judge its value against their own experience of the film. But the cover position also valorizes the film, already established as popular by commercial norms, and this places an inordinate emphasis on the lead article because of the conventions of US commercial publishing. Some readers have criticized this practice in JUMP CUT, pointing out that it then relegates independent left or feminist films to a "less important" place in the issue than, say, LIFEGUARD.

Clearly there is a vicious circle here. At this point in history, a left film, no matter how famous, does not have enough "pull" to attract the occasional buyer of JUMP CUT whom we depend on to keep publishing. So our political ideal of focusing critical attention on independent and Third World film has to be carried out "inside" JUMP CUT and these articles will most likely never make it to the cover position. We literally cannot afford to break the circle.

At the same time, political considerations do affect our covers. We receive many sexist publicity stills for films (and frequently no good stills for films we'd like to feature). We see many film publications, such as Film Quarterly, that frequently run gratuitously sexist covers--obviously to boost sales--and we reject such a practice. Nor do we think of critics as stars and run their names on the cover to appeal to the cognescenti, as does Film Comment. Our readership is mixed--drawing on film enthusiasts and students, radicals, and filmmakers primarily--and we want to use our covers as a way of drawing readers by appealing to their interests and intelligence.

When we started in 1974, we knew that we would always be short of money (called in fancy terms "undercapitalization") as a concomitant of maintaining our political and critical independence. Institutions lend material support (such as money, office space, postage, typing, etc), the National Endowment, state arts councils, and foundations all give grants, advertisers pay for ads, and individual angels give donations only under certain conditions, and they can withdraw the support at any time. The one who pays the piper calls the tune. Most film publications operate with such support. For example, American Film is subsidized by taxpayers through the American Film Institute, Cinema (the US one) has a patron, Filmmaker's Newsletter receives substantial advertising from equipment and service sellers, and other publications depend on grants. As most filmmakers know, this dependent situation also produces a kind of censorship. When and if filmmakers or editors embark on expensive projects, they know they must face these hassles. Furthermore, when a cultural project becomes used to operating at an inflated financial level, that project often disappears when the "extra" outside money stops coming in. Knowing this, we set out at the beginning to devise a magazine we could produce and support ourselves because we believed a modest, but stable, long term publication was more important than a spectacular, short-lived one.

Our particular form of printing is cheap because it serves a special function under capitalism--advertising for small businesses and producing such ephemeral publications as suburban newspapers. Some of us learned how to use this "bargain basement" of the printing business while putting out underground newspapers, and we passed along the skill to others on the JUMP CUT staff. Of course, "cheap" is a relative term. The issue you have here cost about $1,600 to print (5000 copies, or about 32¢ each). We have additional expenses for editorial work, production materials and services, postage, and so forth. Bookstores receive a discount price, so our return is pretty slim. In fact, subscriptions bring in more money per issue sold than sales through dealers. We've thought of changing our price for individual subs and single copies to reflect that difference, but we want to get JUMP CUT to as many people as possible. Our recent move to a better grade of paper may increase sales, but we will need more time for that to happen. It takes years for a publication to build up a loyal following and a stable base of institutional and individual subscribers which provide a guaranteed, regular income.

It takes hundred of hours of donated labor a week to edit, produce, promote, and distribute JUMP CUT. In addition to time, the staff contributes about 30% of the total income needed to keep going. The fact that we have a volunteer staff is an obvious material condition shaping the process of our production. Everyone involved in JUMP CUT does some kind of other work to earn a living. Some of us can donate money and working space; others donate their labor. Those editors who do not live in Chicago or the San Francisco Bay area, where production and distribution is done, receive and critique manuscripts, solicit articles, and help with distribution in their geographic area.

A typical staff work session usually has present people who work on JUMP CUT on a regular basis--Sunday being the usual JUMP CUT "work day." During that time, people read and critique manuscripts, write letters to authors, prepare manuscripts for the typists, proofread, do layout and other production work, check the final version before printing, stuff envelopes with the new issue or pack boxes for mailing to bookstores, and so on. Although these are the stages of an issue, many of them occur simultaneously, since manuscripts come in on a regular basis and are in various stages of process at any given time. Usually after working separately for several hours, the members of the group gathered together at someone's house or apartment that day, all get together to discuss new manuscripts collectively, deciding to accept or reject or ask for revisions. Plans for JUMP CUT, editorial policy, and criticism/self-criticism of our group process are also discussed.

Most left projects work under similar conditions. Labor-intensive and short of capital, without a big advertising budget, we cannot do the kind of promotional campaign we should do to reach all the people who would read JUMP CUT if they knew about it. We've become expert at cutting corners, and at filling hallways, closets, shelves and every other available space with back issues, correspondence, and layout material since we must use our living space for offices. We do almost all of JUMP CUT ourselves. If we could pay to have more things done, we could spend more time editing, going to festivals and conferences, doing research in neglected areas, and writing articles ourselves (especially more on independent radical film, which is a long term goal). But for the forseeable future, our desires are mixed with economic constraints.

The interaction of political and pragmatic concerns defines our day-to-day practice as well as our long range work. From the start we wanted to reach a broad audience and and bridge the usual gaps between committed radicals and non-leftists, between filmmakers and critics, between teachers and other cultural workers, between film people and people working in other media and arts. While wanting to reach a more diversified audience than the usual film magazine, we decided not to water down our politics, but to argue for them in the magazine and in relations with each other and with our readers and writers. To the extent we've been able to do this (and we believe we can do even better to reach our goal), JUMP CUT has had a politics developed in practice, not simply out of abstract theorizing and proclamation. This means as well learning to listen--to writers, to each other on the staff, to readers. Thus we've had feedback sessions with subscribers in the Bay Area and New York City, and we plan more. Thus oftentimes our most important editorial work occurs in the hidden form of struggling among ourselves or with our writers to mutually learn, change, and grow--a subject that we'll discuss in following editorials.

With regard to these political and economic realities, there are many ways in which readers can participate in and support JUMP CUT. The financial ones are obvious: subscribe, keep your sub up to date, tell us when you move (it costs us money if you don't), get your friends to subscribe, use JUMP CUT, tell us about likely bookstores, and, of course, send us a donation if you can afford it. But much more importantly, we want you to engage us on a political level. Send us your criticisms, take issue with our reviews, articles, and editorials, offer alternative views. We want to be in touch with people who use media in their political work, with people who are using JUMP CUT in classes and study groups, with people making political films. We want to know how JUMP CUT could become more useful.

In short, the contradiction between our political goals and the everyday economic realities of publishing produces a tension--sometimes an exhausting one, but often a creative and vibrant one. We've learned that people--writers, staff, readers--are the most important condition shaping the present and future of JUMP CUT and that people --even when working with severely limited time, money, and other resources--make a difference. Together we can begin and continue the changes that must come about to build a humane socialist society.

John Hess
Chuck Kleinhans

Periodical Roundup

(From p.30)

Heresies concentrates on feminist perspectives on art and politics and it shows a great respect for the visual arts in its excellence of design and well chosen illustrations. P.O. Box 766, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013. $10 for 4 issues.

Synthesizing socialism and gay liberation, *Magnus: A Journal of Collective Faggotry* contains thoughtful articles, poems, and reviews. There is a lot of recent gay history, theory, and a strong concentration on political practice. P.O. Box 40568, San Francisco, CA 94140. $6 for 4 issues (free to all institutionalized persons).

In recent years there has been an immense growth in photography as an art form. The attempt to build a theory of photography is just getting underway, and the fruits of that attempt can be seen in the offset tabloid, *Afterimage*'s recent publication of papers from the second conference of photographic criticism. It's important to cinema people to pay attention to such work in order to move from a narrow emphasis on narrative (even when couched in semiotic terms) to a broader analysis of the visual image. Visual Studies Workshop, 4 Elton Street, Rochester, NY 14607. $12 for 10 issues.

Radical Teacher NO. 4 (March 77), has several articles of interest to humanities teachers on the blues, writing oral history, and a politics and literature course. c/o Reamy Jansen, 316 W. 107th St., 3A, New York, NY 10025. Sub $7/unemployed $3.

Working Papers in Cultural Studies, no. 9, spring '76, contains articles on British cultural history from 1935-45, the relations of production and reproduction, and the semiotics of working class speech. This issue $2.55. Center for Contemporary Studies, University of Birmingham, P.O. Box 363, Brimingham B15 2TT, England.

The Open Road is a colorful new Canadian paper. An explicit anarchist politics informs its coverage of people's struggles. The paper is concerned with giving "extensive coverage to what people can and are doing in pre-revolutionary situations to build grass-roots militancy and solidarity. The first issue includes a report on AIM, articles in Holly Near and Phil Ochs, and an interview with Martin Sostre. In true anarchist spirit, *The Open Road* has no sub rate; it wishes to rely on reader donations. Write to them at Box 6135, Station G, Vancouver, B.C., Canada.

The Cultural Worker is an appealing tabloid packed with graphics, poems, and reportage on militant cultural activity--ranging from Native American struggles to those around Puerto Rican independence. There's a good emphasis on feminism and on lesbianism, which has been repressed too often or just not mentioned in other progressive or left publications. Six of the graphics that appear in issue no. 2 are also available in full color, poster format. Subs (4 issues) $4.00 (institutions $6.00). 49 South Prospect Street, Amherst, MA, 01002.

History Workshop: A Journal of Social Historians is written by social historians who study alongside and with workers and who re-create British proletarian history by working with that class itself. The journal is "concerned to bring the boundaries of history closer to people's lives." (P.O. Box 69, Oxford OX2 7XA, England, $4/2 issues.)

The *Anti-Catalogue* was published in protest of the showing of Mr. and Mrs. J.D. Rockefeller III's private collection by the Whitney Museum as an official Bicentennial show. It is a brilliant critique (with photos) of the ideology of establishment painting and the "taste" of the elite. Indispensible for only $3.50. Artists Meeting for Cultural Change, 106 E. 19th St., NO. 4, New York, NY 10003.

From the British Film Institute, 81 Dean Street, London, W1V 6AA, England: Chilean Cinema, ed. by Michael Chanan, is a collection of documents, interviews, and a filmography and bibliography published to accompany a retrospective of Chilean films at the National Film Theatre. $2.75. Structural Film Anthology was edited by Peter Gidal, whose introductory essay provides a flaky pseudo-Marxist interpretation for structuralist, "materialist" films. Other essays and interviews trace various artists' own personal concerns. $1.30.

New German Critique publishes politically astute articles and reviews dealing with Marxist cultural theory. Issue NO. 8 (Spring 76) offered new insights into the relation between Brecht's politics and aesthetics. Issue NO. 10 (Winter 77) contains articles by and about East German songwriter and singer Wolf Biermann, whose recent expulsion from East Germany caused enormous turmoil among intellectuals in East *and* West Germany: Biermann is a dissident, but not an anti-communist one. Box 4B, German Dept., U. of Wisc., Milwaukee, WI 53201. $6 for 4 issues.

Left Curve NO. 6 (Summer-Fall 76) contains articles, poetry, photos, drawings, and photo montages. Directed primarily at working artists, the magazine wants "to raise questions through the presentation of various methods of work being done today" and "to function as a practical tool to help build and develop a viable revolutionary culture." Box 302 Grant Ave., San Francisco, CA 94133. $7 for 3 issues/single issue $2.50.

The Cultural Reporter, one might think, is oriented to the U.S. Communist Party, since in an earlier issue they ran a contest offering a prize for the best poem about detente. Issue no. 13 has articles on sports, Frederick Douglass, Wertmuller, original Native American poetry, and reproductions of "social art." GPO Box 1760, NY, NY, 10001, $1.25 an issue.

In the first issue of Red-Herring, some former editors of The Fox struggle to come to terms with politics and art. Their great anger toward the New York art scene that nurtured (failed to nurture) them gets turned into an interesting and exciting issue (mine had a dollar bill in it; who knows what you'll find). Subs (3 issues) $6.00 (institutions $9.00). Add 75¢ outside USA and Canada. P.O. Box 557 Canal Street Station, New York, NY, 10013.

The rock and roll fanzine *Time Barrier Express*, NO. 22 (Mar-Ap 77) features a complete filmography on rhythm and blues vocal groups in American films since the 1940s. $2.25/issue, Park Ave. Spring Valley, New York, NY 10977.

The Malaysia-Singapore student movement in New Zealand began publishing the Malaysia Monthly Review in April, 1976 to unify the M/S students in NZ's six major cities. Strongly anti-imperialist (they include the USSR), the paper wants to radicalize students on their campuses and contribute to the struggle for the national independence of Malaysia. Send $10 to P.O. Box 22-708, High Street, Christchurch, New Zealand.